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Seventy-first session

84th

plenary meeting

Thursday, 1 June 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 115 (continued)

Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs
and other appointments

(b) Appointment of members of the Committee on
Contributions

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/590/Add.3)

The President: In paragraph 3 of its report, the Fifth Committee recommends that the General Assembly appoint Mr. Steve Townley of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 1 June 2017 and ending on 31 December 2017.

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to appoint Mr. Steve Townley as a member of the Committee on Contributions for a term of office beginning on 1 June 2017 and ending on 31 December 2017?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 115.

Agenda item 10

Implementation of the Declaration of Commitment
on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declarations on
HIV/AIDS

Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/864)

The President: In June 2016, leaders gathered here in the General Assembly Hall to adopt the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030 (see A/70/PV.97). The Political Declaration put in place a road map for the international community to achieve our global aim of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, as set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Today we ask once again that we come together to mark the first annual review of our progress to implement the 2016 Political Declaration. A blunt assessment would say that to date our achievements have been mixed. While important advances have been made, including scaled-up access to antiretroviral treatments and a decline in the number of children born with the virus, the scale of our shortcomings remains of deep concern. HIV prevention rates among adults around the world have largely stalled, with the number of new infections actually increasing in some regions. Almost 1,800 young people a day are being newly infected with HIV, with young women in particular being at higher risk.

If we are to succeed in ending the epidemic of AIDS by 2030, securing healthy lives and well-being for all

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and of achieving the 2030 Agenda, we must scale up our efforts to meet the fast-track targets to fight HIV and AIDS, as reflected in the 2016 Political Declaration. To do so, we must pursue a comprehensive and inclusive approach. I shall now refer to a few imperatives.

We must provide education, information and services to people living with HIV, as well as to young, vulnerable and marginalized people, to women and girls, and to those at most at risk of being infected. We must protect the human rights of all persons without distinction. We must counter stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and populations at higher risk of infection, including sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender persons and people who inject drugs. We must build on the tremendous advances that we have already seen in science, technology and innovation, in order to better support people living with HIV and to find a path towards a vaccine or cure. We must harness the power of all stakeholders to meet this global challenge by strengthening already established strategic partnerships, as well as creating new ones that include Governments, affected communities, civil society, the private sector, academics, scientists and philanthropists. To that end, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS is the prime example of a partnership that seeks to galvanize both multisectoral and multi-stakeholder action.

We must also leverage the integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by building on the synergies between our global AIDS response and our efforts to achieve universal health coverage and well-being, and the implementation of the other SDGs as relevant.

Finally, we must provide adequate funding to meet those objectives, including by reversing the decrease in international support and closing the \$7 billion funding gap for the global AIDS response from all sources — public and private, domestic and international.

We have before us a critical window of opportunity to end the AIDS epidemic. However, to do so we must take action now. Let us therefore seize the opportunity of today's review to commit to accelerating our efforts to implement the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to creating a future where HIV and AIDS are consigned to the sorrows of the past.

It is now my privilege to give the floor to the Deputy Secretary-General, Her Excellency Ms. Amina Mohammed.

The Deputy Secretary-General: It is a real pleasure to address the General Assembly this morning for this annual HIV/AIDS review.

During the process of developing the Sustainable Development Goals, it was clear to me how relevant and innovative the approach to ending HIV/AIDS had been and how important it would continue to be. Achieving our aims on AIDS is interlinked and embedded within the broader 2030 Agenda. Both are grounded in equity, human rights and a promise to leave no one behind.

In June 2016, Member States adopted the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030. As the Secretary-General's report (A/71/864) notes, the AIDS pandemic is far from over. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that more than 36.7 million people are living with HIV globally. While more than 18 million are now on life-saving treatment, that is just half of those who need it, and there is no decline in the number of new infections each year.

People living with HIV who are on treatment can now have the same life expectancy as someone who is not infected. That is why a life-cycle approach to HIV is so important — to ensure that people have access to the services they need at every stage of life.

The world has the scientific knowledge and experience to reach people with HIV/AIDS options tailored to the realities of their lives. I am happy to report today that more babies than ever are being born free from HIV.

Now we need to do a better job of reaching young women and adolescent girls. That is particularly true for sub-Saharan Africa, where adolescent girls account for three out of four new HIV infections among persons from 15 to 19 years of age. Women's and girls' heightened vulnerability to HIV is intimately linked to entrenched gender-based inequalities and harmful social attitudes.

We also need to ensure a more integrated approach to HIV programme delivery. In particular, we need to integrate HIV into sexual- and reproductive-health programmes, including family planning.

Just as we must reach young women, we have to make it easier for other key populations to access health services. Injecting drug users, sex workers and men who have sex with men are 10 to 24 times more likely to acquire HIV than the general population.

Ending AIDS fits squarely within the 2030 Agenda. The global commitments that we made to eliminate gender inequalities, to promote, protect, respect and fulfil all human rights and to achieve universal health coverage mutually reinforce efforts to eradicate AIDS. The AIDS response has led the way for evidence-based policy and programming.

I hope that the voluntary national reviews that States Members of the United Nations will present at the meeting of the High-level Political Forum in July will reflect the lessons learned at the national level in responding to AIDS. I urge Member States to heed the call by UNAIDS for a grand prevention coalition that stimulates action across the five pillars of HIV prevention.

We still need a further \$7 billion to reach our targets for preventing and treating HIV. That translates into about \$0.50 per person per year globally between now and 2030. That small per capita increase in investment could generate significant returns — an additional 21.7 million HIV infections prevented and 8.8 million AIDS-related deaths averted. The economic benefits of such an intervention would generate an 8 to 1 return on investment due to better health and reduced mortality.

I am proud to see how the United Nations and UNAIDS, under the leadership of its Executive Director, Mr. Michel Sidibé, are committed to finding new and better approaches to ending this epidemic. I hope to see our investment in ending the AIDS epidemic and saving lives translate into political and financial investment in UNAIDS, an entity that embodies many of the critical elements that we are seeking to incorporate into our broader United Nations reform efforts. That includes establishing a culture of accountability and strong performance management, with a focus on delivery rather than process and on people rather than bureaucracy.

In conclusion, let me emphasize the importance of taking the opportunity afforded by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and grounding success at the country and community levels. Let us always approach political decisions and meetings such as today's with communities and people in mind. In recognizing the

importance of community-driven solutions and the global commitment to people-centred systems for health, I encourage Member States to listen closely to what communities need and have to say. If we do that, we truly can say that we will end AIDS.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her statement.

Mr. Tangara (Gambia): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The African Group wishes to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this first annual meeting to review the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, which was adopted in June 2016. The Group takes note of the Secretary-General's report, including its recommendations, entitled "Reinvigorating the AIDS response to catalyse sustainable development and United Nations reform" (A/71/864).

At the outset, the African States Members of the United Nations would like to reaffirm their commitment to fighting HIV and AIDS, an epidemic that poses a threat to sustainable development in Africa and to its demographic dividend. Africa's commitment to addressing HIV and AIDS remains unwavering. As a reflection of that commitment, Africa continues to put in place initiatives aimed at accelerating progress in the continent's HIV and AIDS response efforts. They include the African Union (AU) Road Map on Shared Responsibility and Global Solidarity for AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis, adopted by our Heads of State and Government in 2012; the Abuja Action Plan towards the Elimination of HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in Africa by 2030, adopted during the AU Special Summit held in July 2013; and the continuing commitment of African States to allocating 15 per cent to the health sectors of individual national AU State budgets. In the same vein, the African Group welcomes the twenty-first International AIDS Conference, held last July in Durban, South Africa, during which an eastern and southern African ministerial high-level meeting was held to adopt a road map to revitalize prevention. Those are clear demonstrations of our strong political will to strengthen ownership, accountability and partnership in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

It is the view of the Group that ending AIDS requires a local-population approach that responds to regional and national action plans that specifically

target those in the greatest need. The Group recognizes that poverty and unemployment aggravate HIV and AIDS. Ending AIDS requires progress in gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through social protection measures, financial support and educational achievement among women and girls to reduce a woman's personal risk.

The AIDS epidemic continues to disproportionately affect sub-Saharan Africa, where adolescent girls and young women experience high vulnerability and risk and carry the burden of HIV and AIDS. According to the Secretary-General's report, eastern and southern Africa are home to half of the world's people living with HIV. In Africa, AIDS remains a leading cause of death among children, adolescents and young women of reproductive age. While southern and eastern regions of Africa have shown improvements, they are home to 42 per cent of all children who acquired HIV in 2014.

The African Group acknowledges the success of the Global Plan towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children by 2015, while the Keeping Their Mothers Alive initiative galvanized global political will and national action. But in some instances, not all pregnant women have access to antiretroviral therapy or are being offered HIV testing. Western and Central African countries have the lowest treatment coverage. The African Group reiterates that the AIDS response must continue to build progress to eliminate mother-to-child HIV transmission during pregnancy, delivery and breast feeding. The Group reaffirms the need to improve prevention, diagnosis, treatment and strong surveillance systems, strengthen health systems and mechanisms and universal access to services, including increased access to early infant and paediatric diagnosis and treatment. Equally important is sexual health education related to HIV, so as to improve knowledge and responsible sexual behaviour among youth.

The Group is concerned that stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS continue to prevail, which undermines an effective AIDS response. People living with HIV continue to face challenges in all regions of the world and punitive laws, policies and practices that violate human rights and maintain structural conditions that leave populations without access to HIV care services. In some instances, people with disabilities are at higher risk of HIV infection because they are vulnerable to violence, sexual abuse, stigma or discrimination.

While there are increasing numbers of people living with HIV in among older populations, many HIV services are not equipped to address the needs of an ageing population. Furthermore, displaced persons affected by humanitarian emergencies face heightened exposure to HIV vulnerability and have limited access to quality health care and nutritious foods. On the other hand, labour migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers living with HIV face discrimination from States that restrict their entry, enforce mandatory HIV testing or forcibly return them. Such punitive laws and practices undermine efforts to bring HIV treatment to all who need it. The African Group strongly appeals and urges that people living with HIV and AIDS should be treated fairly and equally and should be protected from stigma, discriminatory practices and related intolerance. The Group is thankful to States that have enacted laws and lifted travel restrictions on people living with HIV and AIDS. The Group is also grateful to States that offer employment opportunities and HIV treatment to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.

The African Group is concerned about the slow response to the need to address, in an integrated manner, the myriad related problems for which those living with HIV need health-care support, such as tuberculosis, hepatitis, sexually transmitted infections and food insecurity. We look forward to the upcoming high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis to be held in 2018, during which we hope to make bold commitments to overcome the situation.

The primary aspiration of Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want is to build a prosperous Africa, based on inclusive growth and sustainable development, where African people have a high standard of living and quality of life, sound health and well-being. Accomplishing that goal requires means and resources. Ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 implies front-leading, diversified, reliable resources and reinforcing the fast-track response. We applaud the important step taken in September 2016 with the successful holding of the fifth Replenishment Conference of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Nevertheless, we call on donor countries to increase investment to bridge the remaining gap of \$7 billion required to fulfil the target set in the Political Declaration.

Furthermore, the African Group calls for increased resources dedicated to an effective HIV and AIDS response, including the implementation of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and official development

assistance to support national plans and strategies, as well as financing plans and joint multilateral efforts aimed at combating HIV and ending AIDS. The Group emphasizes the need for technology transfer, capacity-building, market access and support for flexibilities in the context of trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights, including by simplifying and strengthening health regulatory procedures.

We believe that zero new infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS can be achieved by 2030 if emphasis is placed on high-quality education, prevention, advocacy, and access to affordable medicine and a strong health system, and if we are able to build peaceful and inclusive societies and promote and protect human rights. The Group underscores that universal access to HIV and AIDS treatment, care and support remain paramount in global response strategies and constitutes a fundamental human right.

Finally, the fight against HIV and to end AIDS by 2030 remains critical to achieving the goals set in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ending AIDS is at the core of Africa's agenda, but it is also a global aspiration that requires joint efforts and cooperation among all stakeholders.

Mr. Locsin (Philippines): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the States members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam and my own country, the Philippines.

According to estimates from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, in 2015 the HIV epidemic affected approximately 1.7 million people in the ASEAN region. The make-up of affected populations differs according to the epidemic's characteristics in each member State. It may include sex workers and their clients, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men and the transgender population. Other populations — such as partners or spouses of key affected populations, migrant and mobile populations, children and youth, women and girls, people in correctional institutions and people in conflict- and disaster-affected areas — continue to be vulnerable. Addressing HIV and AIDS concerns is therefore integral to our vision for an ASEAN community and to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Last September, the Heads of State and Government of ASEAN adopted the Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS: Fast-Tracking and Sustaining HIV and AIDS Responses to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2030. The Declaration reaffirms ASEAN's commitment to the United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerate the Fight against HIV and to End the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, particularly the commitment to work towards reducing the number of HIV infections to fewer than 500,000 per annum globally, as well as to eliminate HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

Under the Declaration, ASEAN will focus and target HIV/AIDS programmes for key affected populations and prioritized geographical areas, scale up and strengthen the coverage, reach and quality of a continuum of comprehensive, integrated packages of prevention, testing, treatment, care and support services, and pledge to ensure the achievement within ASEAN of the 90-90-90 treatment targets by 2022. The targets are for 90 per cent of people living with HIV to know their status, for 90 per cent of people living with HIV who know their status to receive treatment and for 90 per cent of people who are undergoing treatment to have suppressed viral loads. We must ensure that no one is left behind in the AIDS response and work towards a collective response characterized by equal access to high-quality services.

We must ensure prevention, treatment, care and support. No one should be denied such services because of HIV-related stigma and discrimination. We also sustain the ASEAN HIV/AIDS response by, inter alia, further strengthening the capacities of national and local Governments. We will also continue to invest in broad community participation, including non-governmental, civil society, community and key population networks and organizations, as well as religious leaders, faith-based organizations and businesses in the private sector.

The Organization has the commitment of ASEAN to actively work towards a shared vision of a world with zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. We stand ready to work with the United Nations and relevant parties in order to make that vision a reality.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the Philippines.

Every day, 28 people in the Philippines are diagnosed with HIV. Although the first cases of AIDS

in our country were reported in 1984, 80 per cent of the 41,000 diagnosed cases have occurred in the past five years. Victims come from all walks of life: people who engage in transactional sex, overseas Filipino workers and, tragically, youth, children and adolescents. We are facing an epidemic. We are therefore committed to the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. The Philippine development plan for the period 2017-2022 targets the reversal of the increasing trend of new HIV infections by 2022.

Conscious of the dire need to address the problem in an effective, inclusive and sustained manner, we have adopted evidence-based interventions and are ensuring the delivery of the best available care to all who need it, without discrimination of any kind, while ensuring that no one will be left behind and is mindful of the need to respect the human rights and dignity of all.

The population of the Philippines is very young, with a median age below 24 years. It is also very mobile. We are focusing our efforts on young people, many of whom were not yet born when the AIDS epidemic exploded as a public-health crisis in the 1980s. They are less aware of and less vigilant about the virus. Likewise, we pay particular attention to the vulnerabilities of migrants. With more than 9 million Filipinos living and working abroad, our migration policies seek to strengthen the ability of migrants to access health services, wherever they may be.

We are also ensuring access to quality treatment and prevention services, including affordable and quality antiretroviral drugs for people living with AIDS.

Funding is critical. We have doubled our national HIV programme's budget. We are also working intensively with regional partners, mainly the ASEAN Task Force on AIDS and the secretariat of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, as well as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, to augment country programmes.

Finally, let us not forget the need to focus on cures, including the development of vaccines against HIV. Until that is realized, significant support will still be needed to assist developing countries in achieving the 90-90-90 targets through access to cheaper antiretroviral drugs, point-of-care tests and simplified monitoring protocols for those undergoing treatment.

The President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Parenti (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

The EU is fully committed to the inclusive implementation of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, adopted in June 2016, from a human rights and gender-responsive perspective, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In that context, it is of particular importance that no one be left behind. That commitment was reaffirmed in the communication on a sustainable European future, adopted on 22 November 2016.

Having subscribed to such a commitment, what is now important is acting and delivering real results on the ground. The time has come to scale up prevention and testing programmes and reach out to all people in need, including all key populations: men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, sex workers, transgender people and prisoners. In that regard, it is time to also address social inequalities and social determinants in all our work on prevention, access to screening and care. We need to combine health instruments with social instruments and work together across health and social policies.

In doing so, we should not lose sight of the need to fight the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV and their negative effect on the quality of life of members of key populations, both among those not infected with HIV and those living with HIV. Data collected by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control show that stigma and discrimination, both within key populations and among health-care workers, negatively impact the uptake of HIV prevention, testing and treatment services. From that perspective, it is important for HIV programmes to support community organizations to develop and implement more effective approaches to reduce stigma and discrimination. In that context, the European Commission set up the EU HIV/AIDS Think Tank and Civil Society Forum in order to help with policy implementation and strengthen cooperation among countries, civil society and international organizations.

The European Union and its member States remain committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the outcomes of their review conferences. The EU remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights. With that in mind, we reaffirm our commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of all individuals to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on, matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion or violence. We furthermore stress the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and education, including comprehensive sexuality education and health-care services.

EU-funded actions target the development of new tools or the improvement of existing ones, particularly diagnostics, vaccines and drugs, with an investment of about €201 million — €115 million for HIV/AIDS, €9 million for viral hepatitis or associated liver diseases and €77 million for tuberculosis. Of the investment on HIV/AIDS research, about €60 million is for the development of a preventive and/or therapeutic vaccine, and €26 million of the tuberculosis investment is for two projects on preventive vaccines.

Research results from those actions are expected to produce scientific evidence that is useful to public-health policies. HIV and tuberculosis are important considerations in the development of a new EU Commission communication and action plan to fight antimicrobial resistance, which is currently under preparation, and which is expected to include a strong research dimension. It is a joint initiative of health and research sectors.

It is also crucial to ensure that the global AIDS response architecture is adequately funded, including the symbiotic Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) — Global Fund partnership, through resource complementarity. UNAIDS has a critical role to play. Its unique model should be refined and reinforced so that it can continue to guide the global agenda and support countries as they adopt the fast-track approaches. UNAIDS should remain a pathfinder for United Nations reform.

Mr. Panayotov (Bulgaria): Bulgaria aligns itself with the statement just made by the observer of the European Union. I would now like to make a few remarks in my national capacity.

Bulgaria welcomes the report (A/71/864) of the Secretary-General and endorses the proposed multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches underpinned by the values of human rights, gender equality and sustainability that engage civil society with the aim of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Bulgaria is fully committed to the transformative and inclusive implementation of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, adopted last June, to leave no one behind, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General, efforts should be made to reach all those most affected, most at risk of and marginalized due to HIV/AIDS, and those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It is a matter of concern that gaps in the delivery of HIV prevention, testing and treatment services are largest in the populations that need them most, especially those subjected to fear, stigma and hate crimes due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Much more needs to be done to strengthen prevention efforts with regard to youth, including by providing universal access to comprehensive sexuality education and confidential, non-judgmental services.

Bulgaria endorses the recommendation contained in the report that ending AIDS requires progress across the entire spectrum of human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political, social, sexual and reproductive rights. Respecting, protecting and fulfilling all the human rights of women and girls, accelerating the achievement of gender equality and eradicating all forms of gender-based violence and harmful practices should remain central at all levels of the response.

Bulgaria commends the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) for its leadership and enormous contribution in supporting Member States, providing strategic direction and advancing the global agenda on ending the AIDS epidemic. Bulgaria is committed to the full and accelerated implementation of the UNAIDS 2016-2021 strategy and is supportive of the UNAIDS initiative for a grand prevention coalition. In accordance with the UNAIDS 90-90-90 treatment target, since June 2016 the Bulgarian Government has been providing sustained antiretroviral therapy to all newly diagnosed HIV-affected persons. UNAIDS is an important partner in all efforts at the national level to curb the growth of the infection and end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Over the past 10 years, with the financial support of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Bulgaria has established a large-scale HIV prevention programme as a unique partnership among Government authorities, medical institutions and civil-society organizations. A network of 50 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and 35 preventive health centres has been established, as well as 19 centres for anonymous and free HIV testing, 17 mobile medical units and 18 youth clubs for peer education. In order to strengthen the established capacity and ensure the sustainability of results, the new national programme on HIV/AIDS, adopted in 2016, envisages Government funding for maintaining the network of medical services and for supporting NGOs working with key populations and persons at risk.

Bulgaria underscores the importance of integrated, holistic and high-quality service delivery that protects and fulfils the right to health of all. The Ministry of Health of Bulgaria implements a consistent policy for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS. In March 2017, the Bulgarian Government adopted the new national strategy on HIV and sexually transmitted infections for the period 2017-2020, which complies with international standards and political commitments at the global level. The main objective at the national level is to curb the HIV/AIDS prevalence to less than 1 per cent of the general population.

If we are to make AIDS history and achieve sustainable development for all, we must strengthen efforts to empower women and girls, young people, key populations and persons living with HIV, put an end to all forms of violence and discrimination and realize the human rights of all.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for convening and organizing today's meeting. I also thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/864) and the very valuable recommendations it contains.

Today's meeting is taking place one year after the adoption of a political declaration aimed at stepping up the response to HIV in the coming years and embarking on a path to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, as part of the commitments made by States with the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Colombia is aware of the major challenges that persist in the global fight against the epidemic. As mentioned today, AIDS remains a public-health and development

challenge. The progress achieved is fragile — and as the President stated, almost bittersweet — and requires strong political commitment, meaningful international cooperation and long-term measures.

The epidemic in my country is concentrated, with a low prevalence of 0.47 per cent of the total population and prevalence rates exceeding 5 per cent in key populations. We must meet the challenge of increasing the quality of care for people receiving treatment, as only 63 per cent achieve an undetectable viral load. In the light of that problem, Colombia's response was initially framed by the Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS and last year's Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030.

My country is committed to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular Goal 3.3, which has already been included in Colombia's national development plan and in local and municipal plans, along with the necessary funding. We are also committed to achieving the 90-90-90 target by 2020, agreed to with UNAIDS, and have followed the recommendations of the World Health Organization. We also support the adoption of the combined prevention strategies.

As the report of the Secretary-General indicates, it is essential that the international community redouble its efforts to accelerate global progress in the fight against the epidemic. For that reason, Colombia believes that action should be focused on key areas, such as the social determinants of health; prevention, including treatment as a means of prevention; access to affordable, good-quality medicines; the inclusion of a rights-based approach in the fight against the epidemic; comprehensive sex education and research and development to optimize diagnosis and treatment and move towards a possible cure.

The stigmatization of and discrimination against people living with or affected by HIV are key determinants that most influence the vulnerability of people. They find it difficult to gain access to preventive or care services if, because of their sexual orientation or gender identity or the fact that they are living with the virus, their human rights are violated, they are rejected by family, work or educational environments, or their right to privacy in health services is violated. That is why the measures taken by Colombia are rights-based, so as to promote respect for human rights in

the community. Our country therefore recognizes that sexual and reproductive rights are inviolable human rights that must be recognized, promoted and protected for all people, without any discrimination. Similarly, people's sexual and reproductive health are vital to their physical, mental and social well-being, and services in those areas should therefore be accessible to everyone.

Finally, it is important to recognize that the fight against the epidemic poses important challenges for all States, particularly in the area of finance, and given that public-health resources are scarce and competing with other priorities, new international strategies are needed now more than ever, so as to accelerate the global response to HIV, including the transfer and distribution of technology on favourable terms, including concessional and preferential terms for developing countries. We believe that a great deal of work remains to be done, both nationally and internationally, and it is for that reason that Colombia reaffirms its political commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS, in order to end the epidemic by 2030.

Mr. Joshi (India): India thanks you, Sir, for convening today's plenary meeting on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the political declarations on HIV/AIDS.

We also welcome the statement made by the Deputy Secretary-General earlier today.

India thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/864), which provides a detailed update on the global fight against AIDS to end the epidemic by 2030. The report recalls the global optimism leading to the adoption last year of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, and at the same time also highlights the critical challenges that threaten the momentum gained. We have taken note of the various recommendations of the report to address persistent issues including the investment gap, the slowdown in the rate of decrease of new HIV infections and the limited headway made on the first 90 of the 90-90-90 target framework. While domestic investment has climbed steadily in many countries, international funding remains crucial in order to reach funding commitments.

Harmonizing efforts to combat HIV/AIDS with the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, is essential

in fulfilling the commitments made in the political declarations so far.

Access to safe, effective, quality and affordable medicines remains critical to combating AIDS; without it, we cannot contemplate putting 90 per cent of the people living with HIV on treatment. In that context, India remains committed to prioritizing SDG 17, on global partnerships in that area. The pioneering role of the Indian pharmaceutical industry in facilitating access to affordable antiretroviral drugs is widely recognized. More than 80 per cent of the quality antiretroviral drugs used globally are supplied by the Indian pharmaceutical industry. Government is closely engaged with the industry to ensure that the quality generic antiretroviral drugs from India continue to be available to all those who need it and, in that context, the flexibilities of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights must continue and be strengthened.

India has been successful in achieving Millennium Development Goal 6 of halting and reversing the HIV epidemic by 2015. The fact that new infections declined by 66 per cent from 2000 and 2015, and AIDS-related deaths by 54 per cent from 2007 to 2015, is concrete proof that India has delivered on its global commitment.

India has always followed an all-inclusive approach while working with the most affected, high-risk and vulnerable populations. That success is based on exceptional dialogue and collaboration among Government, communities, people living with and affected by HIV, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. A key role is played by 1 million accredited social activists and more than 1.33 million anganwadi centres, which are courtyard shelters that cater to the health needs of persons residing in rural and difficult-to-access areas. India is now building on lessons learnt to redefine the national approach to reach the last mile in order to ensure a more effective, sustained and comprehensive coverage of HIV/AIDS response-related services.

The vision is that of paving the way for an AIDS-free India by attaining universal coverage of an HIV prevention, treatment-to-care continuum of services that are effective, inclusive, equitable and adapted to people's needs. The goals remain those of the three zeros — zero new infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero discrimination, which form the basis of the National HIV/AIDS Control Programme.

India is also working on two key decisions announced recently, in April, to end AIDS by 2030. The first is the enactment of the historic HIV/AIDS bill as a law protecting the human rights of people living with and affected by HIV. The provisions of the bill seek to address HIV-related discrimination, including in treatment, education and jobs. It strengthens the existing programme by bringing in legal accountability and establishing formal mechanisms for inquiring into complaints and redressing grievances.

Secondly, we have announced and implemented a test-and-treat policy, in line with global guidelines, whereby all persons living with HIV will be offered antiretroviral treatment irrespective of their CD4 count/clinical stage. More than 10 lakh people living with HIV are on antiretroviral treatment in India. In order to ensure that 90 per cent of persons living with HIV are on treatment, around 21,000 HIV counselling and testing centres, 1,500 targeted interventions and 1,635 treatment facilities have been established. To achieve the 90-90-90 targets, India has significantly increased domestic resource allocation for HIV, and 62 per cent of all funds are through the domestic budget.

Mr. Sisilo (Solomon Islands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

High-risk groups, children, women, young people and persons living with HIV/AIDS must be the focus of those targeted interventions, which are contained in the commitments of the Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Affected persons need to live a life of dignity, free of stigma and discrimination. The role of family and communities is important to provide an enabling environment and contribute to the fight to eliminate the epidemic. We agree with the Secretary-General's report that each region has a unique challenge to address. In that context, interventions on HIV/AIDS must be in tune with national laws, cultural and social contexts.

Capacity-building and technology transfer for developing a robust and affordable health-care system in developing countries will help to fast-track the efforts to eliminate the epidemic by 2030. Combating HIV/AIDS and implementing the targets requires a sustained commitment of resources, and the international community and donors must continue their support wholeheartedly.

Mr. Lauber (Switzerland): I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of Zambia and my own country, Switzerland.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize the presence of Mr. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and to thank him for the excellent work and tireless efforts that he and his team have undertaken in Geneva, New York and around the world.

We thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/71/864). We are very pleased to hear his acknowledgement of the vast and rich experience gained with the AIDS response.

Innovation is crucial, but building on good practices is important, too. The AIDS response has produced significant experience in working across different sectors. That is an indispensable requirement if the Sustainable Development Goals are to be achieved by 2030, and it is an experience that should inspire policy-making and programming on other issues.

The UNAIDS Joint Programme has been working systematically across the United Nations system with the sponsoring organizations for more than 20 years. We are convinced that it can be a model for a coherent and integrated system-wide response — the kind that needs to be taken into account in the ongoing discussions on the reform of the United Nations system. It will be equally important to put the recommendations set out in the report of the Global Review Panel on a revised and strengthened UNAIDS operating model in the context of wider United Nations reform.

Switzerland was proud to co-facilitate the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight Against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030 last year, together with Zambia. The document clearly laid out the strategic direction for the coming years. If the AIDS epidemic is to be eliminated as a public-health threat by 2030, fast track is the key. That is also the strategic direction adopted by such important technical and funding partners as UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The strategies are clear. It is now a matter of keeping the promise; it is a matter of implementation.

We would like to underline six points that we consider to be particularly relevant: first, a balanced approach between prevention and treatment, with a continued focus on primary prevention; secondly, ensuring that human rights and gender equality are at the centre of any action; thirdly, an evidence-based approach in order to focus on location and population

where needs are highest, while ensuring that no one is left behind; fourthly, the need to take AIDS out of isolation, whereby the AIDS response proactively contributes to strengthening health systems and achieving universal health coverage, which also means strategically and efficiently linking funding for HIV/AIDS with broader health-system issues; fifthly, the importance of addressing determinants of HIV/AIDS, within and beyond the health sector; and, last but not least, a multi-stakeholder approach that includes the United Nations, civil society, academia, the private sector and other important partners.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Allow me to join other delegations in sincerely commending President Thomson for convening today's review meeting.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Gambia on behalf of the Group of African States.

My delegation also welcomes the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (A/71/864), as well as the statement delivered during the opening segment of today's meeting by the Deputy Secretary-General.

Allow me to seize this opportunity to acknowledge the presence in the Hall of the UNAIDS Executive Director, Mr. Michel Sidibé, and to pay tribute to him and to the members of his team for their commitment and leadership.

Botswana attaches great importance to today's review meeting because it provides an opportunity to review initiatives that have been adopted in the fight against HIV/AIDS over the years, pursuant to the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030. Such initiatives include the 90-90-90 initiative, which aims to drastically reduce new HIV/AIDS infections and end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Botswana continues to place the utmost priority on the fight against HIV/AIDS, as reflected in our current National Development Plan 11 and our national Vision 2036. Those are our two blueprints for national development planning and implementation, which are also aligned to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Africa's Agenda 2063.

In that regard, as a country we have intensified our national AIDS response by introducing a number of interventions. They include the prevention of mother-

to-child transmission and the provision of antiretroviral therapy programmes, which were introduced as far back as 1999 and 2002, respectively. We have also simultaneously intensified public education aimed at addressing the issues of discrimination and stigmatization. As recently as 3 June 2016, our President launched the national TreatAll Strategy, through which health facilities provide antiretroviral drugs to all individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, irrespective of their CD4 cell count. In addition, Botswana adopted a strategic mix of HIV testing services approaches to increase access to HIV/AIDS testing in order to meet the first 90 of the 90-90-90 UNAIDS targets, which currently stands at 70.7 per cent.

Through those programmes and strategies, more than 90 per cent of our HIV/AIDS-positive people have access to antiretroviral drugs. We are proud to be one of the few African countries that have achieved universal access to HIV/AIDS treatments. The prevention of mother-to-child transmission programme has significantly lowered the national mother-to-child transmission rate to as low as 0.9 per cent in 2016, and the country is well on track towards ending AIDS by 2030. Those achievements have been realized through the support and partnership of our development partners, civil society and the private sector, including the United Nations system, for which we are very grateful.

Botswana recognizes that HIV/AIDS remains a global threat to public health and that it should continue to be a priority in the implementation of both the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063. Having made the progress that we have made, we should try to maintain what we have achieved to date and avoid a reversal of the gains we have made by honouring our commitments as members of the international community. In order to ensure that we leave no one behind and control the epidemic, Botswana will embark on the implementation of a programme targeting most-at-risk populations during the 2017-2018 period.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Botswana's continued commitment to reversing the HIV/AIDS trajectory with a view to achieving zero new HIV/AIDS infections and zero HIV/AIDS-related deaths by 2030.

Mr. Wenaweser (Liechtenstein): At the outset, I would like to thank the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Mr. Michel Sidibé and his

team for their incredible leadership in fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

For over three decades, that epidemic has caused immense suffering throughout the world and has had a devastating impact on development and human rights. Although the progress that has been made is promising, the epidemic continues to outdo our response as we risk failing to realize universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support for people affected by HIV/AIDS. As recently as in 2015, we agreed to fast-track our response by increasing and front-loading investments and massively scaling up coverage of HIV services so as to reduce the rate of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

Our efforts are undermined by a number of national and international barriers, including legal, financial, social and cultural ones. Also in 2015, we committed ourselves to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Only a comprehensive strategy that addresses all dimensions of that complex phenomenon will enable us to deliver on our commitments.

HIV/AIDS has a health, a sustainable development and a human rights dimension. It is encouraging that a number of countries have helped to destigmatize people affected by HIV/AIDS — for example by lifting related travel and residence restrictions or ending the criminalization of HIV transmission. Simultaneously, we are alarmed about the continuing legal and factual discrimination in many countries. The fact that homosexuality is still criminalized in almost 80 countries remains an obstacle to effectively addressing the epidemic. The economic and social marginalization of groups at higher risk of HIV infection, such as people who inject drugs, sex workers, prisoners, transgender people and men who have sex with men, often prevent them from fully enjoying their fundamental freedoms and human rights — above all, the right to health.

A suitable response to HIV/AIDS must necessarily address and fully recognize all fundamental elements of HIV risks and vulnerabilities. Women and girls are still disproportionately vulnerable to the epidemic, and their particular situation must be taken into account. In that context, granting them access to sexual and reproductive rights and health services has proved successful in preventing HIV/AIDS and contributes especially to the elimination of mother-to-child transmission. However, neither the recognition of

their rights nor the availability of health services is universal. National and international policies should therefore further focus on reducing disenfranchisement and marginalization, as well as on the empowerment of women and girls.

In addition, our global commitments are not consistently translated into additional investment and action on the ground. Financing has decreased, and progress on reducing HIV infections among adults has slowed. The headway made on the first 90 of the UNAIDS 90-90-90 target — ensuring that 90 per cent of all people living with HIV know their status — is limited and threatens to reduce progress across the continuum of HIV testing and treatment services. Innovative tools and strategies, such as community-based HIV testing models, self-testing and viral load testing, are underutilized.

In conclusion, let me express our full support for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his latest report (A/71/864) and commend UNAIDS once again on its tireless work to translate our commitments in the 2011 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other documents into reality. It is of the utmost importance to further increase political will and investment, both domestically and internationally, in order to maintain our momentum.

Liechtenstein remains committed to that endeavour, both politically and financially. We will continue to support HIV/AIDS-related projects by UNICEF, the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and others, with a priority on prevention and vulnerable groups, especially children and young people. We cannot stress the importance of HIV prevention enough, especially through increasing knowledge about HIV/AIDS starting at an early age, as we believe it to be the basis for a long-term strategy with sustainable results.

Mr. Gertze (Namibia): May I also join others in welcoming Mr. Michel Sidibé, Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), a man who is fast becoming more familiar with Namibia than I am.

Namibia aligns itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of African States and joins others in thanking the President of the General Assembly for convening this important meeting. We also welcome the comprehensive report of the Secretary-

General (A/71/864) and, in particular, appreciate the recommendations contained therein.

A review of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS is important to hastening the end of the HIV and AIDS epidemic by 2030. We must never forget the devastating impact that the epidemic has had on the lives of millions on our planet. Member States have the responsibility to ensure that we do not lose any of the gains made over the past few years. The UNAIDS 90-90-90 target strategy should continue to serve as a foundation for action across a range of diverse stakeholders, and concerted efforts must be made to ensure that we reach those targets by 2020.

Namibia remains one of the countries most affected by the HIV crisis, with a general prevalence rate of 14 per cent, which is a marked improvement from the 18 per cent level of 2010. Our key population of those most at risk is young women and adolescent girls, who are at higher risk of contracting the virus than young men. That is due to various factors, among them a lack of sexual and health education and limited access to resources.

However, Namibia has mounted an aggressive and tireless campaign in combating HIV and AIDS. Since 2002, when the national antiretroviral therapy programme was rolled out, the Government has systematically addressed the challenges of HIV and AIDS. Intervention areas include social and behaviour change communication, HIV counselling and testing, condom marketing and distribution, voluntary medical male circumcision, prevention of mother-to-child transmission and post-exposure prophylaxis. In 2012-2013 the Government contributed 55 per cent of the total expenditure to HIV and AIDS, and by 2013-2014 that contribution had increased to 64 per cent. The Namibian Government is clear about its commitment to addressing HIV and AIDS. Spending is targeted at general intervention, so that, for example, Namibia increased the dispensing of antiretroviral therapy from 10 facilities in 2002 to 271 in 2016.

As data should be at the heart of any HIV response, Namibia is currently conducting an 18-month population-based HIV-impact assessment, with the support of our bilateral partners. We aim to examine the current distribution of the HIV epidemic and to assess the impact of Namibia's prevention, care and treatment response across all 14 regions of Namibia. I would note that Namibia is about the size of Germany and France

put together, with the second-lowest population density in the world. As such, reaching people in remote areas is extremely challenging.

Following the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, Namibia held its first AIDS conference in December to highlight its challenges and to recognize our achievements. We are proud of the progress in our HIV response — demonstrated by the fact that 96 per cent of all babies born to HIV-positive mothers are now being born HIV-negative. That is thanks to our strategy of testing all pregnant mothers who, if HIV-positive, are promptly started on mother-to-child prevention regimens, irrespective of their CD4 cell count. We aim to become the first country in Africa to eliminate mother-to-child HIV transmission and believe we will achieve that well before 2030 if we remain supported by our international partners.

Since the adoption of the 2016 Political Declaration, Namibia has enjoyed a reinvigorated relationship with UNAIDS and our bilateral partners. An example of that is the appointment of Ms. Monica Geingos, First Lady of Namibia, as the UNAIDS Special Advocate for Young Women and Adolescent Girls. In that capacity, Ms. Geingos has used her platform to reach out to young people globally by creating the #BeFree movement. #BeFree was inspired by the UNAIDS drive towards an AIDS-free generation by 2020 through the Start Free, Stay Free, AIDS Free initiative. While HIV remains a focal point, the intention of #BeFree is to create a non-judgmental, inclusive platform that encourages honest and robust dialogue and information-sharing, through ways and means that young people can understand and use. That means that our First Lady is active on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and a myriad of other social networks in order to engage directly with young people.

In conclusion, Namibia remains fully committed to the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS. Our lives depend on that commitment.

Mr. Fernandez Valoni (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for Argentina to take part in this debate, almost a year after the high-level General Assembly meeting on HIV/AIDS, at which resolution 70/266 — containing the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by

2030 — was adopted. Under that resolution, Member States reaffirmed our commitment, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, to accelerating the fight against HIV and ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Argentina actively participated in the negotiation of the Declaration, promoting the inclusion of progressive language on key populations; sexual and reproductive rights; comprehensive sexuality education; a human rights approach; gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls; strengthening public health care; financing and access to medicine. In that context, we thank the Secretary-General for the publication of the report entitled "Reinvigorating the AIDS response to catalyse sustainable development and United Nations reform" (A/71/864), and strongly support and endorse its recommendations.

Argentina recognizes and appreciates the tremendous progress made by the international community as a whole, and by certain States in particular, in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic over the past 16 years. That progress resulted from coordinated, financed and cooperative action, coupled with the firm political will of all relevant global actors. It must guide our efforts over the next 13 years in our pursuit of the ultimate goal — to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally. In that regard, we consider it vital to solidify the commitments and progress achieved to date and are convinced that this is a key moment in our path towards the final goal. It is time to reaffirm and redouble our commitment, our political will and our resources to embark on the final stretch of our comprehensive strategy to end the epidemic. Under no circumstances should we let our commitment to the process wane in the light of the gains we have made so far.

Regarding the implementation of the 2016 Political Declaration, we firmly and resolutely support a human rights and gender approach in the fast-track strategy to end the epidemic. In that connection, we will continue to promote the full implementation of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Strategy 2016-2021, as well as the scope of the 90-90-90 targets for 2020. We are convinced that the respect, promotion, protection and full enjoyment of all women's and girls' human rights — including their sexual and reproductive rights, as well as gender equality and empowerment — are essential to achieving the ultimate goal of putting an end to the epidemic.

HIV/AIDS continues to be a global health emergency and a priority challenge for the development, progress and stability of our societies. It requires an exceptional and broad global response that understands that the spread of HIV is often a cause and a consequence of poverty and inequality. The protection of the rights and sexual and reproductive health of young people and adolescents, comprehensive sexuality education and access to quality medicine and health services are key to any effective action to prevent and combat the epidemic. Universal access to health coverage and social protection systems, early initiation of antiretroviral treatment and universal access to such treatment are also critical to the inclusion, integration, protection and treatment of people living with HIV/AIDS.

In that sense, access to quality, affordable medicines is a *sine qua non* for ending the epidemic. To that end, the international community as a whole, States, the private sector, academia and civil society must step up their efforts, financial resources and cooperation in technology transfer and investment in research and development in order to achieve that goal.

At the national level, our HIV response is coordinated, with the involvement of multiple actors from different sectors of national life, including civil society, people living with HIV and key populations. As part of the national response, Argentina has developed and bolstered its public policy of prevention and access to both diagnosis and treatment. That response has become a State policy, financed exclusively through our national budget. Argentina guarantees the availability of antiretroviral treatment and access to HIV testing and diagnosis in a universal, free and confidential manner.

In conclusion, we reiterate our firm support for the work of UNAIDS and the full implementation of its programmes and strategies. We call for all necessary resources to enable it to carry out its mandate in pursuit of the ultimate goal of ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic by 2030.

Consistent with the Leave No One Behind commitment of the 2030 Agenda, we firmly believe in the need to adopt a transformative and inclusive approach for everyone — women, children, adolescents and young people, and key populations in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly people who use drugs, sex workers, gays and men who have sex with other men, transgender people and people in prison and other closed settings — who are particularly vulnerable not

only to the virus itself, but also to multiple forms of discrimination, stigmatization, violence and exclusion for reasons such as age, race, religion, disability, economic status, sexual orientation, gender identity and others. Only in that way can we honour the commitment under the 2030 Agenda to ending the AIDS epidemic within the next 15 years. We must strengthen our awareness of the need to consolidate our gains and redouble our efforts, without hesitation, in order to be able to help all those living with the virus or who are in situations of greater risk because of it, without leaving anyone at all behind. Accelerating the fight against HIV and ending AIDS will be our legacy for present and future generations.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): This annual plenary meeting is of crucial importance, since it is the main occasion for member States to jointly review the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and its subsequent political declarations.

It is encouraging that, one year after the adoption of the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, we will have the opportunity to review the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 3.3 at the next high-level political forum. Brazil will join that effort as one of the 44 countries presenting a voluntary national review.

My delegation commends the Secretary-General's report, entitled "Reinvigorating the AIDS response to catalyse sustainable development and United Nations reform" (A/71/864). It is an important guide to what we still have to accomplish in order to achieve our main goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. My delegation fully subscribes to the Secretary-General's recommendations for strengthened joint action by countries, civil society, international donors, the United Nations system and other key partners as we approach the deadline for the 90-90-90 strategy. It is fundamental to ensure that we interlink the future of our AIDS response with the Secretary-General's United Nations reform efforts. The results of such reforms must be translated into concrete actions on the ground.

For Brazil, any AIDS response must be based on three pillars: promoting the human rights of people infected with HIV/AIDS, universalizing access to prevention and treatment, and ensuring the availability of the necessary national and international resources. Brazil welcomes the commitments to fast-tracking the

response to the AIDS epidemic, agreed at the General Assembly's 2016 high-level meeting on ending AIDS. That meeting also made history by shifting the focus to key populations — a key step towards reaching the paramount goal of leaving no one behind.

Countries and regions must be able to respond to specific patterns of the epidemic. The Governments of countries with a high prevalence of HIV need to adequately focus on the needs of populations that are at higher risk of infection. In Brazil, for example, there is a high HIV incidence among people who use drugs and young men who have sex with men. Furthermore, the response will be lacking if we do not act with a gender perspective, providing comprehensive information, voluntary counselling and testing to young women and adolescent girls.

Over the past 30 years, Brazil has made significant advances in that field thanks to our national public health system, which guarantees universal access to treatment and diagnosis. Brazil's Ministry of Health has endeavoured to consolidate a combination prevention strategy in the country. A few years ago, Brazil was a pioneer in the adoption of a treatment as prevention approach that recommended antiretroviral therapy regardless of viral load count. I am glad to announce that pre-exposure prophylaxis incorporation has now been approved as a national public policy.

Today, since approximately 500,000 people benefit from antiretroviral therapy in my country, we have reached the goal of increasing the proportion of people living with HIV/AIDS who have been receiving treatment and have a suppressed viral load to at least 90 per cent. I also want to stress that the participation of civil society in designing and implementing HIV/AIDS programmes is a pivotal tool for the inclusiveness and effectiveness of Brazilian public policies. Since the costs involved in universalizing the response are challenging, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of creating mechanisms to reduce the price of therapy. The imperative of public health must always prevail over commercial interests.

It is important, therefore, to highlight the role played by the public health flexibilities under the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. Its full implementation, as agreed upon in the Doha Declaration and the World Health Organization Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Public Health, Innovation and Intellectual Property, is a powerful and

effective tool for reaching universal access targets. As there is so much still to be done, especially in developing countries, we call upon the developed nations to keep their commitments to maintain and expand their pledges and international cooperation with a view to the fulfilment of our collective challenges.

We must acknowledge that the international institutional framework for HIV/AIDS response is much more sophisticated and efficient nowadays than it was in the past. The action of innovative mechanisms such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization; the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative; and the International Drug Purchase Facility have a big impact, particularly in low-income countries, helping overcome institutional and market failures that prevented lower prices and, consequently, access to medicines. In that regard, we must carefully follow up last year's United Nations high-level meeting on antimicrobial resistance and guard against setbacks in access to treatment of AIDS and other infectious diseases.

Concerning antimicrobial resistance, I want to make reference to tuberculosis, which remains one of the main causes of death among people living with AIDS. Tackling antimicrobial resistance means saving human lives, in particular those of the most vulnerable. In that regard, Brazil's health authorities look forward to participating in the high-level meeting on the fight against tuberculosis, to be held in 2018.

The way Brazil has been dealing with HIV/AIDS would not be possible without the cooperation of third parties. I take this opportunity to recognize the key role that UNAIDS, under the leadership of Mr. Michel Sidibé and his team, has been playing in assisting Member States in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic over the past 20 years. I also want to congratulate Mr. Tedros Adhanom on his recent election to Director-General of the World Health Organization. He has our full support to keep up the momentum in the fight against HIV/AIDS and to continue the significant work led by Ms. Margaret Chan in the field.

Finally, we must bear in mind that the framework provided by the 2030 Agenda gives us a unique opportunity to end the AIDS epidemic in our generation. We cannot miss the major chance at hand. The Organization can count on Brazil.

Ms. Loe (Norway): Our global achievements give us hope for the future. However, AIDS is not over.

Now is the time to move forward across all sectors in order to ensure that all children start their lives free of HIV, grow up and stay free of HIV and that treatment becomes more accessible so that everyone stays free of AIDS.

Global health, including HIV, has been a long-standing priority for Norway. Together with education and gender equality, it ranks at the top of our development agenda. Norway supports the five key recommendations of the Secretary-General and would like to highlight a few important points.

The principle of the Sustainable Development Goal of leaving no one behind means ensuring that discrimination and criminalization do not create obstacles for effective interventions. We cannot accept the possibility that the HIV epidemic can keep growing among key populations, such as men having sex with men and people who inject drugs. The evidence shows that strengthening the approach to human rights is not only ethically sound, but also that it leads to better, more sustainable results.

Women's and adolescents' sexual and reproductive health and rights are being challenged. Therefore, Norway is fully behind the She Decides initiative. The right of women and young people to have control over, and make decisions about, their own sexuality and body is crucial for their health and gender equality, as well as for fighting poverty and ensuring sustainable development.

HIV persistently and disproportionately affects young people. Girls in sub-Saharan Africa are facing a triple threat: a high risk of HIV infection, low rates of HIV testing, and poor adherence to HIV treatment. Education is one of the most powerful ways of improving people's health and of making sure that the benefits are passed on to future generations. Comprehensive sexuality education is key. Taking AIDS out of isolation remains an imperative if we are to achieve our targets. For Norway, the mission of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) remains important. We need to ensure that UNAIDS continues to deliver critical results despite the situation of budgetary constraints and increased insecurity of funding.

Last week, Norway had the pleasure, together with Sweden, to introduce an important draft resolution in the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in Vienna on a very important topic that has

not been addressed before, namely, the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in prisons. We know that the female prison population is rising around the world, that the women are generally young adults, and that the rate of incidence of HIV in those women is much higher than it is for women who are outside prison. Many children are, unfortunately, born in prisons, and there are no systems in place to prevent the transmission of HIV or monitor the transmission in those cases.

In the draft resolution, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, together with the World Health Organization, the UNAIDS secretariat and others are asked to collect data on the status for HIV transmission from mothers to children in prisons, and on the provision of services. Additionally, it offers guidelines on how to implement the prevention of mother-to-child transmission in prisons and provide technical support to countries. We need to guarantee the successful prevention of vertical transmission and to ensure that the work towards the elimination of such transmissions is also happening in prisons around the world. We therefore urge UNAIDS to implement the important draft resolution and urge donors and Member States to provide funding for such programming.

In conclusion, we will not be able to achieve either the Sustainable Development Goals or implement the UNAIDS strategy without involving communities and groups with shared goals and challenges. We should work together to overcome the barriers.

Ms. Mwangi (Kenya): I thank President Thomson for convening today's meeting and for giving us the opportunity to speak on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and to share our thoughts on reinvigorating the AIDS response in order to catalyse sustainable development. We welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/71/864) and take note of the recommendations therein.

Kenya aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Gambia on behalf of the Group of African States.

In June 2016, Member States came together and agreed on a fast strategy to end AIDS by accelerating the fight against HIV and ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. This goal is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which mandates us to ensure health and well-being for all. Progress has been made, but regrettably we continue to see new infections,

and, as noted by the Secretary-General in his report, financing for the response has flatlined and progress on reducing new HIV infections among adults has stalled.

Girls and women continue to bear the brunt of the AIDS epidemic, and in sub-Saharan Africa girls account for 75 per cent of new HIV infections among people between the ages of 15 and 19. That is an indication that adolescents and young people have not effectively realized benefits commensurate with the significant investments that have been made in the provision of HIV services, including prevention, care and treatment. We need to do more.

Kenya is a country burdened with HIV, with an estimated 1.5 million people living with the virus. Our data estimates from 2015 indicate that there were approximately 77,647 new HIV infections, 71,000 of which were among adults, of whom 55 per cent were adolescents and young people aged 15 to 24. The prevention of new infections among adolescents and young people therefore remains paramount to the country's management of the epidemic. To deal with the scourge, Kenya has adopted a data-driven and multisector HIV response to rally the resources of different Government agencies, communities and stakeholders towards the common goal of accelerating access to services to young people and the most vulnerable, while recognizing those demographics as priority populations for the HIV response.

Kenya has a devolved system of Government and is divided into 47 counties for effective governance and service delivery to the people. Kenya, with the assistance of its partners, has profiled the status of the HIV epidemic in each of the 47 counties of Kenya. The purpose is to effectively support county Governments and to facilitate their planning, implementation and monitoring of the HIV response by using a location-population approach in order to address the unique sets of challenges faced by each county. The Government also launched a fast-track plan to end new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths among adolescents and young people in September 2015. The plan provides an implementation framework for counties, sectors and stakeholders to ensure that high-impact interventions reach the prioritized target populations of adolescents and young people in prioritized locations.

The Kenya AIDS Strategic Framework for the period 2014-2019 is aligned with the 2030 Agenda,

Agenda 2063, the African Union's goals on HIV control and our development blueprint, Kenya Vision 2030. The framework outlines an innovative, leverage-funding approach based on the implementation of the HIV fund that aims to increase resources and access to universal health care for those living with HIV and, ultimately, to subsidize Kenya's future liability for HIV prevention and treatment.

HIV-related stigma remains a significant barrier to many young people accessing HIV counselling and testing, as well as lifesaving HIV treatment. In 2015, the President of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta, launched the All In initiative to end AIDS in adolescents. The initiative focuses on mobilizing and empowering youth as agents of change and encourages their participation in decision-making processes in HIV/AIDS-related programmes. It also aims to improve data collection for informed decision-making and encourages innovative approaches to enable adolescents access essential HIV services.

Last year, Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to ending HIV-related stigma and discrimination with a new national campaign, entitled Kick out HIV Stigma. The campaign aims to engage Kenyan youth through county football leagues, leveraging the power of football to mobilize young people to end HIV stigma and link them to stigma-free HIV testing, treatment and care.

We are encouraged that mother-to-child transmission rates fell from 16 per cent in 2012 to 8.3 per cent in 2015. That was due to increased access to antiretroviral therapy by pregnant women, from 56 per cent in 2012 to 75 per cent in 2015. Despite those gains, progress in mother-to-child transmission is still uneven across counties, and we are hoping that the HIV county profiles can assist in reaching every pregnant woman and move towards zero transmission.

Kenya has also developed the second elimination of the mother-to-child transmission framework to cover the period 2016 to 2021, with the goal of sustaining coverage of HIV and syphilis testing at 95 per cent. Other goals including keeping rates of use of antiretroviral therapy among HIV-positive, pregnant and lactating women to at least 95, maintaining absolute neutrophil counts of at least 95 per cent, reducing mother-to-child transmission rates to less than 5 per cent and lowering new syphilis cases transmitted from mother to child to fewer than 50 per 100,000 live births.

We are happy to report that the annual number of deaths from AIDS in adolescents and young people in Kenya has fallen from 9,000 to 4,000 over the past three years. That decline has been due to the fast-track plan for ending HIV in adolescents, which has enrolled over 40,000 young learners in antiretroviral programmes. The Government is investing in research and encouraging young people in decision-making, as well as getting them involved in research undertakings.

As noted in the Secretary-General's report,

"Achieving the strategic milestones and targets that we committed to in the 2016 Political Declaration will not be possible if the status quo is maintained. AIDS is far from over and stubborn challenges stand in the way. Our efforts to close gaps must ensure that no one is left behind by empowering people who have been pushed to the margins of society, protecting human rights and delivering services to all in need" (A/71/864, para. 12).

We support the call of the Secretary-General to support the efforts of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to refine and reinforce its Joint Programme model so that it can remain a pathfinder for United Nations reform, lead efforts to take AIDS further out of isolation and support countries to fast-track their AIDS responses.

High-burden countries like Kenya cannot achieve those strategic milestones and targets without cooperation and dedicated support from partners. In that regard, we want to recognize the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the United States Centers for Disease Control and the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. They have been our partners in aligning investments to scale up interventions that are most effective in the areas and populations with the highest burden of HIV/AIDS.

We also want to thank UNAIDS and UNICEF for their continued support in our fight against HIV/AIDS. We call on Member States to commit to closing the \$7 billion investment gap that is required to end AIDS and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Mr. Grant (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada takes great pride in its support for the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, including the strategy for

acceleration of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). We reaffirm our determination to attain the goals and targets that are spelled out therein. We welcome with satisfaction the Secretary-General's report. We are grateful to the Secretary-General for having underscored those areas where we must step up our efforts and those areas where we must focus our resources.

(spoke in English)

We are concerned that in recent years, despite increased investment, there has been little progress in terms of mortality and incidence rates, which have been stagnating. We believe that to be a signal that we need to innovate and do better. We will need to develop and scale up not only new tools and technologies, but also new approaches to reaching key and vulnerable populations with prevention programmes, testing and treating and retaining those in care.

To do that, we must improve our ability to reach marginalized and vulnerable populations, particularly adolescents, a group that, in the context of HIV/AIDS, is poorly understood and challenging to reach. As a consequence, they are at significant risk. Another area where we will need to do more is how we work to empower women and girls. We welcome the strong focus placed in the report on this issue and the approaches that it proposes. Women and girls are more than just beneficiaries. They are also agents of change in their families and in their communities. Their leadership potential must be fully realized and integrated in our response. We also need to do better in reducing mortality from tuberculosis (TB), the leading cause of death among people living with HIV. We need to step up efforts against TB by building on the success we are seeing in countries like India. Those experiences have shown us the necessity and effectiveness of actively reaching out in communities to find the missing cases and place them on treatment. That is why we invite all partners to renew their engagement and investments in the fight against TB.

(spoke in French)

In order to achieve the ambitious goals outlined in the Secretary-General's report, we must closely monitor our progress and seek to ensure that all are held accountable for upholding their individual and collective commitments to eliminate the threat of HIV/AIDS to public health by 2030. Today's meeting is an important step forward. As agreed in the 2016 Political

Declaration, we shall continue to count on UNAIDS to assist Member States by, among other things, bolstering accountability mechanisms and facilitating the participation of all stakeholders in the achievement of results.

We welcome the call for improved and strengthened methods of functioning for United Nations aid within the framework of broader efforts to accelerate reform within the United Nations. Canada in particular should like to ensure that UNAIDS is positioned to assist States in optimizing the resources of the Global Fund to Combat AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

(spoke in English)

I would simply like to say that the fight against HIV/AIDS requires, more than ever, continued collective leadership if we are to achieve our ultimate goal of ending AIDS by 2030.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/864), which provides ample food for thought about ways to step up efforts to counter the spread of HIV and support its carriers. We welcome the recent results achieved in combating HIV, including expansion of the scaled application of antiretroviral therapy, the reduction of AIDS-related mortality and the reduction of new incidence of infection. Such progress gives hope for the elimination of AIDS by 2030, as set forth in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We believe that the determination of the trajectory of our future action must be based on a balanced approach. It must reflect the cultural and religious specificities of countries and national legislation, as enshrined in the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030. We therefore cannot agree with some provisions of the report, which endorses supplying needles and syringes, using opioid substitution therapy and other contentious practices in the spirit of a harm-reduction strategy that is not universally accepted, and portrays these as effective tools and strategies for improving the quality of life and health of intravenous drug users.

We believe that the fundamental goal of public health care is not drug-related harm reduction but the total elimination of drug use for non-medicinal purposes. The treatment of opioid dependence by replacing some narcotics with others is at odds with scientific

approaches to prevention and treatment. For this reason, Russian legislation bans the use of methadone therapy. Consequently, the recommendations contained in the report to expand the availability of the relevant services cannot be applied within Russia, and since that is the case in other countries too, the recommendations cannot be considered universal. We believe that it would be more realistic to take the path of integrating State efforts to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS among drug users, including intravenous drug users, into a range of measures aimed at reducing rather than increasing the demand for narcotics, and that attempts to address the two issues separately will not yield the desired results.

We are perplexed by the report's affirmation that the criminalization of drug possession and use creates certain barriers to the delivery of HIV/AIDS-related services. We should recall that determining punishment for drug-related crimes, including possession, and the application of additional alternative punitive measures in line with international drug-control conventions, is the prerogative of States.

We believe that the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is the principal platform for identifying further strategies and methods to combat infection. As such, UNAIDS is designed to support other United Nations systems and work to that end. In that regard, we would like to draw attention to the work being done by UNICEF on a strategic vision for HIV/AIDS for the period 2018 to 2021.

As we see it, the section on preventive measures is not clear enough on the areas of activity that prevent risky conduct. It is important not to limit our work solely to the so-called medical measures that combat the spread of the virus. Rather, we must encourage people, particularly young people, to engage in more responsible conduct and adopt a more responsible approach to their health and future. We believe it would be wise to coordinate the two bodies' efforts and, in line with the 2016 Political Declaration, to supplement the document that is being drafted with provisions on the prevention of risky conduct and awareness-raising campaigns on the consequences of such behaviour where the likelihood of infection is concerned.

The Russian Federation is working in a targeted way to prevent the spread of HIV. In recent years, traditional medical measures have been supplemented with an important new element, namely, the deployment of an ongoing, wide-ranging awareness-

raising campaign among the people, including efforts targeted to young people, both in school and at work. The active engagement of civil society and non-profit organizations in HIV prevention activities will help to significantly enhance their effectiveness, given the fact that civic organizations respond to the real demands of society and can quickly provide services for those who for some reason fall through the cracks of State services, including those in at-risk groups. This has been facilitated by amendments introduced into Russian legislation in 2016 that guide work with socially oriented non-profit organizations.

In conclusion, we reaffirm the Russian Federation's readiness to help strengthen regional cooperation in combating HIV, including the ongoing practice of organizing international Eastern Europe and Central Asia AIDS conferences in Moscow, the next one of which will be held in April 2018 with support provided by the Government of the Russian Federation. We hope to increase attendance at those conferences, which will help to raise its standing as a leading representative forum on the issue in the regions of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Ms. Bogayay (Hungary): Hungary thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/71/864). We remain fully committed both to the fight against HIV/AIDS and to the implementation of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030 in that regard.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development set the lofty goal of ending the epidemic of AIDS by 2030, thereby contributing to the broader principles of equity, human rights and leaving no one behind. In order to do so, our policy programmes must be ambitious and underpinned by political will, professional support, and sufficient human and financial resources in their implementation.

Critical elements in our efforts towards ending the epidemic by 2030 include sustainable financial support for prevention, increased screening uptake and treatment and fighting against stigma and multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination towards people living with HIV/AIDS, particularly in rural areas, where transmission is less frequently detected in certain groups of the population.

HIV/AIDS prevention and early diagnosis are among Hungary's health-policy priorities. They have been supported by the Ministry of Human Capacities since the very beginning of the epidemic. Hungary has been able to contain HIV/AIDS quite successfully. Our actions include awareness-raising and educating the public, including through the media. That includes increased regular screenings and counselling services to the population at risk, diagnosing HIV at an early stage, HIV prevalence surveys among pregnant women, needle-exchange programmes and the exchange of experiences with case studies and best practices. Preventive steps aimed at young people include school programmes on prevention and responsible sexual behaviour, as well as health promotion for teenagers.

In that context, we remain committed to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, age-appropriate and evidence-based comprehensive sexuality education, as enshrined in the 2030 Agenda and the HIV/AIDS Declaration, as well as the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action, which continue to serve as basic references on the issues at hand, in line with supplementary national legislation.

We are proud that Hungary has achieved almost two of the 90-90-90 targets. Specifically, 90 per cent of persons diagnosed as HIV-positive have access to antiretroviral therapy, and almost 90 per cent of patients receiving treatment are HIV-free or have a very low level of copies of HIV's genetic material per millilitre. In Hungary, every HIV patient has access to the latest antiretroviral drugs for a very low fee, resulting in the decrease of copy numbers in the blood to an undetectable level, a significant improvement in the quality of life of those infected, and making the likelihood of transmission close to zero.

We believe that, with an additional collective push, elimination of the epidemic by 2030 is possible, and we reiterate our commitment to this end.

Ms. Moldoisaeva (Kyrgyzstan): Kyrgyzstan is committed to the implementation of the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, in accordance with our national laws, national priorities and international principles of human rights.

Our country has developed the necessary institutional basis for dealing with the epidemic. The new United Nations framework programme for 2018-2028, adopted in May 2016, highlights the importance of addressing HIV/AIDS. Our National Sustainable Development Strategy 2040 and our State programme for combating HIV infections in the Kyrgyz Republic for the period of 2017 to 2021 will also be adopted soon.

To achieve the goals stated in the Declaration, the Government of Kyrgyzstan is in the process of identifying as many people as possible living with HIV. To this end, rapid testing is carried out and mobile clinics are used for observation in remote rural areas. Increased access to testing for the population has contributed to the improvement of detectability from 588 cases in 2015 to up to 714 in 2016. Discussions of the national policy on HIV/AIDS issues, existing challenges and solutions are being planned for the national high-level conference on the spread and treatment of HIV/AIDS in Kyrgyzstan during the visit of the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Mr. Kazatchkine, which is scheduled for September this year.

Given the fact that combating HIV/AIDS requires comprehensive measures not only at the national level but also at the regional level, the implementation of the Political Declaration was a subject of discussion at the 27th meeting of the Health Council of the Commonwealth of Independent States, held in Bishkek in April.

In conclusion, we deem it important to emphasize that the economic hardships of developing States restrict the ability to finance HIV/AIDS programmes in the State budget. As noted in the Secretary-General's report (A/71/864), although domestic investment has increased, the decline in donor revenues, currency fluctuations and delays in the receipt of expected donor funds have led to a slight decrease of annual investment in low- and middle-income countries in recent years. Without sufficient funding, many of the achievements made will be lost and the programmes shut down. In this regard, we believe that only a commitment to progress and coherence of efforts of the State, civil society, and international partners will allow for the goals set to be achieved.

Mr. Djani (Indonesia): At the outset, I wish to thank the President for convening this review of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. I also wish

to thank the Secretary-General for his report updating Member States on the current state of the progress made in pushing back the spread of HIV/AIDS globally (A/71/864).

Indonesia aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Indonesia continues to be fully committed to reducing the number of new HIV infections and HIV-related deaths and eliminating HIV/AIDS-related stigma by 2030. It is well recognized that the highest risk of HIV/AIDS transmission is through drug use and unsafe sexual interactions, which put hundreds of thousands — if not millions — at risk of infection. What is more alarming is when HIV-positive persons are unaware of their HIV status and therefore make no special efforts to mitigate infection. This can lead to the even-worse scenario in which HIV is transmitted from pregnant women to their babies. In this context, since the adoption on the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and to Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, Indonesia has taken the following actions.

First, we are engaging with communities and doing outreach programmes in the context of the 90 per cent target of all people living with HIV knowing their HIV status. We recognize that comprehensive engagement with vulnerable groups is crucial. The development of the concept of continuous HIV and sexually transmitted disease comprehensive care as an approach in Indonesia's HIV programme has incorporated the critical role of community involvement. The active role of community, including people living with HIV and their families, in facilitating comprehensive care should ideally start from home or community through health-care providers and then back to home or community.

Secondly, we are working to strengthen health-care systems at every level, especially primary care and mobile testing, and to improve the quality of both HIV/AIDS services and services preventing mother-to-child transmission by expanding care and support services down to local clinics. The Government has been providing antiretroviral drugs to all people living with HIV; such drugs can be accessed in all care, support and treatment service centres in Indonesia.

Thirdly, we are striving to reach high-risk groups with AIDS prevention programmes. We promote the consistent use of condoms as well as community-

based testing and counselling. Mobile testing tends to be more effective in reaching some communities, particularly at-risk groups that are susceptible to stigma and discrimination.

While practical and concrete steps are crucial to push back the transmission of HIV/AIDS, there also needs to be a solid legal and policy framework to support action. In this regard, several laws have been adopted since 2013 to ensure the rights to health, particularly in relation to the provision of reproductive-health services for women and girls, and protection from HIV/AIDS.

The launch of our national strategy for reproductive health is aimed at developing responsible and healthy behaviour in adolescents. The strategy is being promoted vigorously at the community level through community health centres. Every municipality or city is mandated by the Ministry of Health to have four centres that are able to implement an adolescent-friendly health-service programme. As of 2014, there were almost 3,000 adolescent-friendly health-service programmes across 405 municipalities or cities.

We are also focusing very hard on preventing mother-to-child transmission. National guidelines on the subject have been adopted, and capacity-building for health-service providers carrying this programme has been provided by the Government, focusing on a region with a high number of HIV cases. In 2014 alone, the Government performed 1,583 HIV test and counselling service programmes. Within the testing and counselling services provided, 214 were mother-to-child prevention service units and 465 were service units for care, support and medication. In addition, there are as many as 450 Government-authorized hospitals where the public can get referrals for HIV/AIDS services, 1,290 service units for sexually transmitted diseases, and 223 tuberculosis/HIV service units.

We have all agreed that HIV/AIDS is a scourge that can be eradicated. In 2011, at the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, we agreed to focus on strengthening measures to avoid the transmission of the virus, including counselling, education, reducing risk-taking behaviour and encouraging responsible sexual behaviour that encompasses abstinence, fidelity and the correct and consistent use of contraceptives. Unfortunately, the same language has not been retained in the 2016 Political Declaration.

Important inroads have been made to reverse the spread of this epidemic globally through those

approaches. It is important to continue the efforts on the ground, not only with key populations but with all affected and potentially affected populations. Indonesia supports the promotion of risk-reducing behaviour. However, we need to go a step beyond that: in our view, to truly stop the HIV/AIDS virus in its tracks measures that encourage risk avoidance are required, as it would be a far more effective way to fully ensure non-transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus. In the midst of the many diseases and pandemics that the world is facing today, we should enhance cooperation and work together to address the spread of HIV/AIDs globally so that no one is left behind. Indonesia is fully committed to that goal.

Mr. Braun (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Luxembourg would like to congratulate the Secretary-General on his first report on the response to HIV/AIDS (A/71/864). The report highlights the progress made and the obstacles still to be overcome.

I fully agree with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. However, I would like to add a few points in my national capacity.

The fight against AIDS has not yet been won. We must not yield to complacency. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has set the ambitious goal of ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030, a goal reaffirmed in the Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030, adopted a year ago.

The 90-90-90 initiative launched by the joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is a continuation of the success of the Treatment 2015 initiative, improving access to antiretroviral therapy. This triple objective goes beyond simple treatment; it also strengthens prevention, which is essential in the fight against AIDS.

My country has been supporting the 90-90-90 initiative since its launch, both financially and politically. I would like to highlight in particular the commitment of Mr. Marc Angel, a member of the Parliament of Luxembourg who was appointed a UNAIDS champion for the 90-90-90 treatment target. In April of this year, Mr. Angel carried out an important study and awareness-raising mission in South Africa, Botswana and Lesotho.

Despite advances in antiretroviral therapy and suppression of viral load, we are far from achieving

the primary goal of 90 per cent of people infected with HIV knowing their HIV status; we are closer to 60 per cent. In that context, Luxembourg supports the Secretary-General's call for a revolution in screening. It is important to strengthen screening services and bring them closer to the people and communities that need them.

Another priority is to build on the success of the Global Plan towards the Elimination of New HIV Infections among Children by 2015 and Keeping Their Mothers Alive. Luxembourg has supported this plan throughout its implementation from 2011 to 2015. The results for children are impressive: new infections in newborns have been reduced by more than half, and the number of children from the ages of 9 to 14 years on antiretroviral therapy has more than doubled. But there is still much to do in terms of access to diagnosis and paediatric treatment.

The fight against AIDS requires a multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach. The Secretary-General rightly emphasizes in his report the need for combined and comprehensive prevention, including universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and family planning, comprehensive sex education, availability of condoms, voluntary circumcision and pre-exposure prophylaxis.

Girls' education, nutrition and food security have been shown to contribute to lowering the rate of HIV infection. Human rights and the fight against all forms of stigma and discrimination also remain at the heart of the fight against AIDS. The most affected populations are often the most marginalized and are denied their rights and access to the care and services they need. In that regard, too, action is required.

We are facing an investment gap of \$7 billion per year to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 and reach the 90-90-90 triple target by 2020. However, national resources dedicated to the fight against AIDS are sharply increasing, and the recent replenishment of the resources of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria was a great success. Luxembourg has increased its contribution to the Global Fund by 8 per cent for the years 2017-2019. Our annual contribution is now €2.7 million.

By mobilizing additional resources, care must be taken to ensure that the resources available are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. Close collaboration among all actors, including UNAIDS,

the Global Fund and the World Health Organization, is essential. Luxembourg supports the strengthening of the UNAIDS working model.

The five main recommendations made by the Secretary-General get it right. My country supports them as a whole. There is perhaps only one drawback: we question the usefulness of a so-called grand coalition to strengthen combined HIV prevention. We believe that the existing structures and frameworks to strengthen prevention are sufficient at the present time.

We have the means to end the AIDS epidemic as we continue and strengthen our commitment at all levels.

Ms. Amadeo (United States of America): The United States commends the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the Global Fund, partner Governments and civil society on the tremendous progress outlined in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the Political Declarations on HIV and AIDS (A/71/864). To end the HIV/AIDS pandemic, it is critical for all partners to continue to fast-track their efforts. We must focus on delivering effective interventions to the populations and locations with the highest HIV/AIDS burden.

The United States strongly supports the leadership of UNAIDS in the global HIV/AIDS response. We applaud UNAIDS for its data-driven efforts that have encouraged us all to focus on ensuring that the right HIV services are available in the right places at the right time and in the right way so that we can have the greatest possible impact with our investments. We also would like to commend UNAIDS on producing the world's most extensive epidemiological data on the AIDS pandemic. Having the right data is vital to tracking progress towards meeting the commitments made in the 2016 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: On the Fast Track to Accelerating the Fight against HIV and Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030.

The United States, through the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), is committed to partnering with countries to control the epidemic by focusing on data, mutual accountability and transparency, in order to implement evidence-based HIV prevention, treatment and care interventions that accelerate progress towards this goal. Through PEPFAR, we have helped save and improve the lives of millions of men, women and children around the

world, but our work is far from done. The United States is particularly focused on the need to prevent new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women, 390,000 of whom were newly affected last year alone. We have responded with programmes like the PEPFAR-led DREAMS public-private partnership, which has reached over a million adolescent girls and young women. We are also committed to expanding access to HIV treatment for children. PEPFAR now assists nearly 1.1 million children living with HIV in receiving life-saving antiretroviral treatment.

Continued global solidarity, coupled with increasing shared responsibility and strategic investment as defined by the 90-90-90 global targets, puts us on a trajectory to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The United States encourages all Governments to redouble their efforts towards controlling the HIV/AIDS epidemic as they implement the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a global community, we have made tremendous progress, but this is no time to slow down or rest on our laurels. Together we have an extraordinary opportunity to control and ultimately end the HIV/AIDS epidemic as a public-health threat, thereby creating a world that is healthier, stronger and safer for us all. However, it will take all partners working with commitment, focus and accountability to reach the targets outlined in the 2016 Political Declaration for ending AIDS. The commitment of the United States to helping to control and ultimately end the HIV/AIDS epidemic is unwavering.

Mrs. Arrieta Munguía (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico welcomes the presentation of the Secretary-General's report on the progress made in implementing the various declarations of the General Assembly on the global response to HIV/AIDS (A/71/864). We agree on the need to revitalize the action response to ending HIV. States, agencies of the United Nations system and other stakeholders must make a commitment to accelerating the actions needed to meet goals in this area, including in such cross-cutting issues as universal health coverage, access to sexual and reproductive-health services and attention to key populations through specific policies.

My country has developed a national programme that has borne fruit. As recognized by the World Health Statistics report released this month by the World Health Organization, Mexico now has the fourth-lowest prevalence of people living with HIV in the Americas. However, there are still challenges that need

to be addressed in some key groups, such as men who have sex with men, and sex workers, which still require public policies that ensure a human rights approach in order not to leave anyone behind. Likewise, we believe that the involvement of key populations — young people, women and girls, as well as those living with HIV — is paramount.

The community model has borne fruit in Mexico: annually civil-society organizations compete for federal resources that are made available for project development. Between 2013 and 2016, for example, approximately \$5 million was allocated to improve prevention, detection and treatment. Without a doubt, prevention must be at the heart of the international response. According to our national experience, preventive policies are cost-effective compared to other forms of monitoring intervention.

In the same vein, we recognize that detection is fundamental. We are convinced that targeted testing among key populations identified in each society is a better investment of resources than massive generalized testing. At the same time as identifying the right key groups, it contributes to getting treatments more effectively to people living with HIV, in line with the 90-90-90 initiative.

As a member of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board, we want to express our support for the joint programme model, as it is an exercise in which States, United Nations system agencies and non-governmental organizations work hand in hand to eliminate this epidemic, in the context of the implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We also believe that the shared-resource management lessons for achieving goals, expressed in the unified budget and work plan, can contribute to the discussions on the coherent and coordinated work of the United Nations system in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

We therefore invite all stakeholders involved to support UNAIDS, including financially. We consider it necessary to strengthen the Joint Programme in order to operate as an agency of the United Nations system that fosters international cooperation for the design of standards in the field and is not reduced to a simple project manager of the resources of other finance mechanisms.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to address the General Assembly

at this meeting to review the progress made in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. El Salvador welcomes the significant progress made at the regional and global levels in the fight against the HIV and AIDS epidemic. At the same time, we recognize that we still have many challenges ahead to ensure that people living with HIV/AIDS are not left behind, as we committed to doing when we adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We wish to reaffirm our commitment to guaranteeing human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without any discrimination, with special emphasis on addressing the inequalities, needs and rights of people living with HIV/AIDS.

El Salvador, as a country committed to reaching Agenda 2030, is promoting a comprehensive reform of the health system, where two of the reform's transversal axes are social participation and human rights, with the aim of guaranteeing high-quality comprehensive care, without stigma or discrimination. In that regard, El Salvador has a national multisectoral strategic plan in place to respond to HIV for the period from 2016 to 2020, which guarantees the commitment of all sectors, since it is not an exclusive sexual issue, but is a security issue, education and national development and given that the impact of the epidemic affects the entire population of our country.

Our national HIV/AIDS programme seeks to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to accelerate the response to HIV to meet UNAIDS 90-90-90 targets, with strategies for primary prevention, early diagnosis, timely initiation of antiretroviral therapy and viral suppression for people living with HIV — which are the essential elements of the effort to contain the epidemic — and for reducing the mother-to-child transmission of HIV, syphilis and other sexually transmitted infections, with a focus on populations at higher risk and experiencing inequalities.

El Salvador has fulfilled the commitments it made to the Organization in the Political Declarations to contain the HIV epidemic. In recent years, we have progressed as a country in the national response. We have set ourselves a common goal and we are making our best efforts, giving priority to investments in health in unfavourable financial scenarios. As a result of that effort, we have seen a steady decline in the number of new diagnoses per year and a decrease in mother-to-child HIV transmission. Within this framework, we have established an ongoing campaign for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital

syphilis, and we have kept vertical transmission of HIV below 2 per cent, thereby achieving one of the goals of the Strategy and Plan of Action for Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis of the World Health Organization (WHO).

In addition, antiretroviral therapy is provided free of charge throughout the country. Our health-care workers have been trained to treat people with HIV in accordance with WHO guidelines. We have in place an information system that allows us to better understand the epidemic, which also allows us to make decisions to optimize our response. We have established a national commission for HIV response and a national coordination mechanism throughout the country with broad multisectoral participation, including for people affected by HIV, which has allowed us to achieve the best results possible.

El Salvador has worked extensively to strengthen the recording and monitoring of HIV information, including by providing counselling before and after testing, as well as updating testing tools, which makes it possible to better understand the epidemic. The information generated with those tools has made it possible for the country to fulfil our national and international reporting commitments.

Mr. Sumi (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his report on the very important topic of the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the political declarations on HIV/AIDS (A/71/864).

The international community has achieved outstanding progress in the reduction of both the number of deaths from AIDS-related illnesses and the number of new HIV infections towards our relevant target in the 2030 Agenda, which is the end of HIV/AIDS by 2030. On the other hand, we still have to improve access to comprehensive prevention, treatment, care and support for HIV/AIDS.

The most effective means to ensure universal access to these services is the achievement of universal health coverage. Achieving universal health coverage requires social restructuring and a firm commitment to the principle of leaving no one behind from the benefits of health services.

Health systems will need to mobilize large financial and human resources. Therefore, we have to place a higher priority on health-sector development,

increasing domestic-resource mobilization and enhancing the international framework to support developing countries. Furthermore, it is crucial to address the needs of those who are particularly vulnerable, such as women and girls and other key populations, thereby creating a world where there is neither prejudice nor discrimination.

Japan has long played a major role in global health and has supported the efforts of developing countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally, through such bodies as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Global Fund, to strengthen their health systems. In that connection, last year Japan pledged to provide \$1.1 billion to international health organizations, including the Global Fund. So far, we have disbursed \$400 million of that pledge. Japan intends to fulfil its commitments to the international community and to contribute even further to addressing the world's global health challenges, including HIV/AIDS.

Mrs. Bartoli (France) (spoke in French): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for organizing this meeting to present the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the political declarations on HIV/AIDS (A/71/864).

France aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union on behalf of its member States.

We also wish to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his follow-up report on the High-level Political Declaration of June 2016, which allows us today to take stock of the implementation of the collective commitments made in the Assembly last June.

France welcomes the considerable progress achieved in the fight against HIV/AIDS over the past 15 years. That progress was made possible thanks to unprecedented mobilization by States, international organizations and civil society. In particular, I would like to commend the commitment of Mr. Michel Sidibé for his leadership of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the tireless efforts of his teams to galvanize mobilization around HIV/AIDS at the highest level in order to strengthen the rights of affected individuals and to change mentalities around this pandemic.

As the Assembly knows, France is fully committed to achieving the targets for 2020 to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, in accordance with our commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the various commitments we undertook to that end. The Secretary-General's report shows that the challenges to achieve those targets remain enormous. With four years left before our first deadline, we must pursue our efforts with determination through an inclusive approach that respects rights so as to leave no one behind. We must focus on innovation, ambitious and shared financing and a resolutely cooperative governance.

We must first adopt an inclusive approach to leaving no one behind. Indeed, much work remains to be done to achieve universal access to prevention, treatment and care. The HIV epidemic continues to have a disproportionate impact on key populations, as well as on women and girls who are victims of violence and discrimination, which makes it more difficult to receive proper care for their disease.

Placing key populations at the heart of the response to HIV is the only way to eliminate AIDS by 2030. France maintains its commitment to this goal: it has made the issues of human rights, promoting the role of civil society and affected communities, and sexual and reproductive health and rights priorities within the multilateral institutions that it heads.

At the national level, we have made pre-exposure prophylaxis accessible to those most at risk of HIV infection in order to put an end to transmission. More broadly, access to counter-HIV services remains limited in many parts of the world owing to weak health-care structures and human resources, but also to the cost of diagnosis, treatment and care.

The situation in West and Central Africa is particularly worrying, with antiretroviral coverage rate estimated at 24 per cent in some areas, according to a report by Médecins sans frontières published in 2015. The situation must be addressed urgently. I would like to commend the efforts undertaken by UNAIDS and its partners with regard to the catch-up plan for the region. We have encouraged those efforts from the outset and we continue to support them, notably through our technical assistance.

Our second focal point in the fight against AIDS is the need to strengthen innovation and for ambitious and shared funding. The stagnation of funding dedicated to the fight against HIV/AIDS is a significant obstacle

to achieving the targets for 2020. France has placed the fight against infectious diseases at the heart of its priorities and its international financial commitments. As the second-largest contributor to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, we have committed €1.08 billion for the 2017-2019 period. We provide more than 20 per cent of international funding for HIV-related programmes, which enabled more than 9 million people to receive antiretroviral therapy as of the end of 2016.

We are convinced that we must leverage innovation and research to achieve our international commitments in the fight against HIV. Innovation in our financing methods, which France achieved through a tax on airline tickets and financial transactions, enables us to provide the United Nations International Drug purchase Facility (UNITAID) with nearly 60 per cent of its annual budget. We have leveraged innovation in both approaches and tools, and UNITAID has played a key role in that regard by increasing access to methods of diagnosis for patients and creating a paediatric market for antiretroviral treatments. These efforts contributed in particular to reducing tenfold the cost of HIV treatment and multiplying tenfold the number of people benefiting from these medicines.

In this limited financial context, the strengthened commitment of the countries affected to financing the fight against HIV/AIDS, and more generally to strengthening their health-care systems, is crucial. At the same time, a certain number of middle-income countries will soon be forced out of international financing mechanisms. These developments must be anticipated and prepared for as much as possible by countries, in coordination with international organizations, as more than 50 per cent of people living with HIV reside in those countries.

The third pillar of our national and international actions is resolute cooperative and innovative governance. The achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in the fight against HIV/AIDS calls for a comprehensive response and for more coordination of our interventions in order to avoid silos and to increase our effectiveness. The World Health Organization, through the new global health-sector strategy on HIV for the period 2016-2021, is fully aligned with the strategy and targets established by UNAIDS, whose role in such coordination is essential. France will fully play its role in the process under way to review the joint programme model. Coordination

must remain at the centre of our considerations about reform of the United Nations in general.

The Assembly can count on France to continue to steadfastly support this process multilaterally and bilaterally through its next stages.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 10?

It was so decided. Announcement regarding the results of the election of the Chairpersons of the Main Committees

The Acting President: Before we adjourn for a well-deserved lunch, I should like to inform members

that the following representatives have been elected Chairpersons of the six Main Committees of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and are accordingly members of the General Committee for that session: First Committee, Mr. Mouayed Saleh of Iraq; Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee), Mr. Rafael Ramírez Carreño of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; Second Committee, Mr. Sven Jürgenson of Estonia; Third Committee, Mr. Einar Gunnarsson of Iceland; Fifth Committee, Mr. Tommo Monthe of Cameroon; and Sixth Committee, Mr. Burhan Gafoor of Singapore.

I congratulate the Chairpersons of the six Main Committees for the seventy-second session of the General Assembly on their elections.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-first session

85th plenary meeting
Thursday, 1 June 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 32

Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

(a) Report of the Secretary-General (A/71/899)

(b) Draft resolution (A/71/L.71)

The President: In connection with this item, the Assembly has before it a report of the Secretary-General circulated in document A/71/899 and a draft resolution entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia", issued as document A/71/L.71.

I now give the floor to the representative of Georgia to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.71.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): Over the past year, one person per second was forced to flee from conflict, violence and disaster. We have 65 million displaced people around the globe today, a record high number. Among them are up to 400,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from my country, Georgia, uprooted in several waves of ethnic cleansing from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, currently under foreign occupation. They have been living in protracted displacement for more than 20 years, and despite the time difference with Georgia — it is almost midnight there — they are watching us closely right now.

I would like to share with the Assembly a message I received from an IDP from Abkhazia, 21-year-old Tamar, in which she describes her feelings about displacement, which I believe are shared by all displaced persons. She writes:

"I have a home: the one I have not been given a chance to live in, the one I have not been given a chance to explore, the one I love. I have a house, the one I currently live in, merely a roof over my head. While someone may have a house, they may not have a home where they feel free and accepted. Our only hope is to return home, even if the house is no longer standing".

Today I take the floor to address the Assembly on behalf of my Government and in the name of forcibly displaced individuals like Tamar to introduce and solicit support for the draft resolution contained in document A/71/L.71, entitled "Status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia", under agenda item 32, entitled "Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development".

The Organization unanimously recognizes the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as the key international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons. Through this draft resolution, we would like to once again galvanize international support to reaffirm those very rights for the displaced population in Georgia, the overwhelming majority of which — 88.3 per cent of respondents — indicated

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the wish, in the intentions survey carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), to return voluntarily to their area of origin. In other words, we call for the application of universally acknowledged principles to the case of the displaced population in Georgia.

The draft resolution before the Assembly is based on three fundamental principles: securing the rights of the displaced, including the right to safe and dignified return, as well as property rights; the unacceptability of forced demographic changes; and the need for unimpeded humanitarian access. Furthermore, the resolution emphasizes the importance of the Geneva international discussions mandated by the six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and calls upon all participants to be more active in producing tangible results. For that very reason, both the draft resolution and the subsequent report of the Secretary-General serve as reference points in the Geneva international discussions and complement the work being done on humanitarian issues.

The security and human rights situation in the occupied territories is being exacerbated by the continued installation of razor-wire fences and so-called border signs, kidnappings and arbitrary detentions, seizure of property, and restrictions on free movement and residence as well as on access to education in one's language, all based on ethnic origin. The closure of the entry and exit points across the occupation line by the regime in control in the Abkhazia region severely restricts the freedom of movement of the local population and creates additional impediments to the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes.

On 9 April 2017, a so-called referendum was held in the Tskhinvali region to rename it the "Republic of South Ossetia-the State of Alania", mirroring the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, in the Russian Federation. The so-called treaties on integration with the Russian Federation and the subsequent creation of a joint group of armed forces, as well as the merging of law-enforcement and investigative bodies, reflect a policy of factual annexation of Georgia's regions and demonstrate the need for an adequate, immediate and consolidated international reaction.

Despite the continuous call for access to the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as the Special Rapporteur on the human rights

of internally displaced persons, have been repeatedly denied access to these regions by the regimes in control.

In response, the Human Rights Council expressed serious concerns over the continuous violations and the humanitarian situation in the occupied regions of Georgia, and on 24 March it adopted resolution 34/37, sponsored by 43 States. In the complete absence of basic safeguards to monitor the situation on the ground, the resolution calls for immediate access by the Office of the High Commissioner and other international and regional human rights mechanisms to the occupied territories, while expressing concern over the fact that internally displaced persons and refugees from these regions continue to be deprived of their right of return to their places of origin in safety and with dignity.

Pending their return, the Government of Georgia is making every effort to alleviate the burden of and ensure decent conditions for the displaced population, in accordance with the national strategy and its relevant action plan. At the end of 2015, with the support of the UNHCR/Ministry for Refugees and Accommodation joint project, the Livelihood Action Plan 2016-2017 was adopted, which provides opportunities for IDPs and their host communities to fulfil their potential by gaining financial independence from the State and becoming self-reliant. In parallel, the Government is pursuing durable housing projects for the displaced population through housing construction, the procurement of apartments and individual houses and the privatization of property.

Despite the current artificial barriers, we also continue to respond to the concerns of our compatriots living in the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions — ethnic Abkhaz and Ossetians — who are an integral part of our common history and future. We believe that one day we will all live together in peace and prosperity, with families united and communities returned to their native soil.

The pledge to leave no one behind has been a powerful message of recent frameworks initiated by the international community: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on climate change. As a joint commitment, it is important to catalyse progress on addressing the needs of IDPs worldwide. The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, in Istanbul, and the Agenda for Humanity, along with the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants,

increased international focus on the need to prevent and reduce forced displacement by addressing its root causes. The priority attached by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, to preventing conflict and sustaining peace has been further encouraging the deployment of renewed efforts so as to capitalize on the momentum created during the past few years.

When one person is arbitrarily expelled from his or her domicile, we call it a crime; but when hundreds of thousands, or even millions, are forcibly displaced and are not allowed to go back to their homes, we call it a humanitarian crisis. In fact, we should call it no less than a "mass crime". The rights of the displaced should be acknowledged, reaffirmed and protected regardless of political processes. In paragraph 43 of his report A/71/899, the Secretary-General is also explicit in that:

"The individual's right to return, in the case of an internally displaced person, derives from his or her right to freedom of movement as stipulated in international human rights instruments. It is essential to recognize that return is both a human right and a humanitarian issue and therefore cannot be directly linked to political questions or the conclusion of peace agreements. It must be addressed irrespective of any solution to the underlying conflict."

One cannot argue against this humanitarian cause. Each and every member State concerned with the current humanitarian catastrophe in the world must take a responsible decision when the issue is raised in the General Assembly. Therefore, I once again urge members to vote "yes" on draft resolution A/71/L.71 so as to recognize and safeguard the rights of the displaced population from Abkhazia, Georgia, and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia.

Members' conscious and sustained vote in favour of this draft resolution is a vote in support of the principles of humanity and of international law, to which we all subscribe.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development — GUAM and its member States: Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Republic of Moldova and my own country, Ukraine.

Millions of people in the GUAM countries have been affected by armed conflicts, disrupting their lives and leaving them in need of protection, assistance

and support. The protracted nature of the conflicts in the GUAM area is one of the most serious challenges that our nations are facing. While in some countries displacement is an ongoing crisis, in the GUAM area displacement is already a generational issue that needs to be addressed regardless of the political settlement of the conflicts.

Ensuring the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in the GUAM area, as the principal way of achieving durable solutions for the forcibly displaced persons, is an overarching goal of our countries. We believe that political issues cannot be used for preventing or conditioning the exercise of the right of return to places of origin, as well as the enjoyment of property rights.

The World Humanitarian Summit held in May 2016 and the New York Declaration adopted at the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants in September 2016 reaffirmed our joint commitments to leave no one behind, while upholding the norms that safeguard humankind.

Draft resolution A/71/L.71 addresses the plight of hundreds of thousands of IDPs and refugees forcibly displaced from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions of Georgia as a result of the conflict and several waves of displacement in early 1990s and in 2008. The protracted nature of the conflicts not only increases the number of those expelled from their homes, but also adds to their suffering. As a humanitarian draft resolution, the text focuses solely on the humanitarian aspects of the displacement and calls for respect of the right of return, property rights and humanitarian access to the affected regions of Georgia. Notably, the overwhelming majority of Georgian IDPs are willing to return to their homes, as reflected in the 2015 survey of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, according to which 88.3 per cent of its respondents indicated their willingness to return to their homes voluntarily, in safety and with dignity.

We believe that the General Assembly is best placed to send a powerful message to the affected persons, as well as to the participants in the Geneva international discussions — an important platform to discuss and facilitate the return process. We regret that, since the adoption of resolution 70/290, at the seventieth session, none of its clauses has been implemented, as underlined in the Secretary-General's report A/71/899.

We condemn all actions against basic human rights and freedoms in respect of internally displaced persons and refugees, in violation of the relevant obligations under international law. In this light, we are seriously concerned by the recent developments in the occupied territories of Georgia, including the holding of the so-called referendum on 9 April 2017 in the Tskhinvali region to rename the region the Republic of South Ossetia, State of Alania, as well as the systematic closure of the checkpoints along the occupation line with the Abkhazia region to impose further severe restrictions on the free movement of the local population. Such developments create additional impediments to the return of IDPs and refugees to their homes.

In the complete absence of basic safeguards to monitor the situation in the occupied regions, unimpeded access by humanitarian actors and human rights monitoring bodies to these territories is of paramount importance. In this context, we recall the adoption for the first time by the Human Rights Council, during its March 2017 session, of the resolution on cooperation with Georgia, in which the Council expresses serious concern over the human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied regions of Georgia — Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, calls for immediate access by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner and other international and regional human rights mechanisms to the occupied territories, and also expresses concern over the fact that internally displaced persons and refugees from these regions are unable to exercise their right of return to their places of origin in safety and with dignity.

The GUAM member States reiterate their unwavering support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

In conclusion, we consider support for draft resolution A/71/L.71 as a sign of solidarity with all forcibly displaced persons around the world, as well as of the reaffirmation of the commitment of the international community to the fundamental right of return and the right to property and humanitarian access. Therefore, as in previous years, we will vote in favour of the draft resolution and encourage others to join us in supporting this noble cause.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Baltic and Nordic States:

Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Norway, Sweden and my own country, Lithuania. Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Ireland and Poland align themselves with this statement.

With the global number of refugees and displaced persons reaching tens of millions of persons, including hundreds of thousands in Georgia, the urgency to address the needs and plight of those affected is more urgent than ever. The World Humanitarian Summit and the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants held in 2016 have once again highlighted the crippling effects that protracted conflicts and continued displacement have on affected persons and communities, with serious repercussions at the regional and international levels. Therefore, we fully support the Secretary-General's call for renewed efforts to prevent internal displacement, address its root causes and support affected communities.

Draft resolution A/71/L.71 commits us all to continuing to work for protection for and assistance to those who have been forcibly displaced from the Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia regions of Georgia.

We remain concerned about the human rights situation on the ground. New restrictions on the freedom of movement and access to health care and education in the native language by the de facto authorities remains a cause of continuous concern. Regrettably, no international human rights monitoring mechanisms have been granted access to assess the situation in these regions. We share the Secretary-General's call on the de facto authorities controlling the territories of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali to ensure the unhindered access and operation of international organizations working on humanitarian and human rights protection issues.

We take this opportunity to reaffirm our strong support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognized borders.

We remain seriously concerned by the decision of the de facto authorities in the Georgian regions of Tskhinvali and Abkhazia to conduct the so-called elections earlier this year. Let me recall that we do not recognize the constitutional and legal framework within which these illegitimate elections have taken place. We do not recognize the so-called referendum on amending the name of the Georgian region of Tskhinvali, which was held on 9 April. These illegal

actions violate Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and greatly undermine the ongoing efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

To conclude, we are pleased to see a growing awareness of the international community regarding the need to address internal displacement, including pressing humanitarian issues faced by the forcibly displaced persons and refugees from the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali. In this context, we welcome the adoption of the resolution on the cooperation with Georgia at the thirty-fourth session of the Human Rights Council. The need to find lasting solutions consistent with international human rights law and humanitarian law in these regions persists. Given the negative realities on the ground and the need for United Nations continuous engagement, as in previous years we shall vote in favour of the draft resolution and call on others to support it.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/71/L.71.

Before giving the floor for explanations of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Boucher (Canada): Canada is pleased to once again support the draft resolution on the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region in South Ossetia, Georgia (A/71/L.71). Today's important draft resolution is designed to remind the international community of the pressing issue of protracted displacement. In Georgia, hundreds of thousands of people in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain displaced owing to circumstances beyond their control. Year after year, they suffer from the hardship of displacement, waiting for the day when they will finally be able to return home.

Canada's support for the draft resolution sends a clear message: we stand in solidarity with millions of IDPs and refugees around the world. We call on the international community to ensure that those forcibly displaced are able to exercise their fundamental rights, and to strengthen efforts to establish durable peace in order to facilitate the voluntary, safe and unhindered return of all IDPs and refugees to their homes.

(spoke in French)

In this context, we underline the importance of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement as a way forward on ensuring the international community can fulfil its responsibility to protect vulnerable displaced persons. Canada, without reservation, will continue to support Georgia's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognized borders. We are encouraged by Georgia's sustained efforts in promoting immediate, full, sustained and unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and refugees in all conflict-affected areas in Georgia.

Canada invites all member States to join in sustained efforts to alleviate the suffering of all people affected by conflict and to unite in order to strengthen efforts to establish durable peace. Supporting the draft resolution will bring us one step closer to reaching that goal.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian):* For the tenth time, the Georgian delegation has submitted for consideration by the General Assembly a draft resolution on the problem of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia (A/71/L.71). Despite the active campaign of the authors to promote their approaches to this topic during all these years, the proposed projects have never enjoyed the support of the majority of member States. That is quite understandable.

It is obvious to us that their discussion and adoption will not help those who, as a result of armed clashes, have lost their homes and livelihoods and were forced to leave their places of permanent residence. That clearly demonstrates that the purpose of the draft resolution is purely political. Behind their actions is not genuine concern for the people of Georgia, but rather an attempt to speculate on the fate of those victims of the aggressive policy of the Georgian authorities, culminating in an armed attack on the Tskhinvali region of South Ossetia, in August 2008.

With its reckless actions, Tbilisi has actually alienated the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, who have proclaimed independence. In promoting the draft resolution and declaring its humanitarian orientation, its authors are in fact seeking to challenge those realities. Ignoring the real needs of people who are in a situation of forced displacement, they continue their line, which, in practice, leads to the impossibility of a substantive discussion on the issue

by the parties within the framework of the Geneva discussions. Equally dangerous is the fact that it causes serious damage to the work in that format as a whole. It undermines the concept of the ongoing negotiations, which, provided that there is goodwill and interest of the participants, can achieve results.

Preference is again given not to a substantive dialogue with Sukhum and Tskhinval, but rather to slinging accusations against them in forums where they are not represented and, accordingly, can not bring their point of view on what is happening. They cannot, for example, respond to allegations of restrictions on freedom of movement or directly share information with delegations about the fact that thousands of people cross the borders of Abkhazia and South Ossetia with Georgia every day. Additionally, they cannot talk about the steps they have taken to improve the mechanism of cross-border movement and develop the corresponding infrastructure. They also cannot talk about the measures that they have taken to simplify border management for the local population.

In such conditions, we have once again circulated as relevant documents of the General Assembly the corresponding information prepared by the authorities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We hope that it will be taken into account by delegations in determining their positions on the draft resolution under consideration.

We remain convinced that the use of the issue for political purposes, all while bypassing the Geneva discussions, is fraught with the complications of the situation in the region, the slippage of solving numerous humanitarian issues and the undermining of the process of building trust between those in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia, which is absolutely necessary if we really want to improve the situation of displaced people.

In the light of the foregoing, the delegation of the Russian Federation requests a vote on draft resolution A/71/L.71. Russia will vote against the document. We call on other delegations not to support the draft resolution.

Mr. Shearman (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom supports the important draft resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia (A/71/L.71).

The draft resolution reaffirms the unalienable rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to

return to their homes in a safe and dignified manner, regardless of their ethnic origin. It is a humanitarian and human rights issue and it should not be linked to wider political processes. There are more than 250,000 registered internally displaced persons in Georgia. Many live in difficult and vulnerable conditions. It is important for the General Assembly to send the message that it has not forgotten those people and that it will continue to call for their return home. It is all the more important to do so with every year that goes by.

The United Kingdom welcomes the Government of Georgia's work to help improve the situation of IDPs and welcomes regular reports documenting the human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia by both the Government of Georgia and the Georgian ombudsmen. It is important that national and international legislation be effectively implemented to aid efforts to help and protect the lives of internally displaced persons.

We remain deeply concerned by the broader political and human rights situation in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, particularly with Russia in effective control of 20 per cent of Georgia's sovereign territory. Recent developments, including the reduction of Abkhazian administrative boundary line crossing points from six to just two, has had a damaging impact on civilian livelihoods, freedom of movement and educational opportunities.

The absorption of South Ossetian troops into the Russian Army, the referendum in South Ossetia on changing the name of the region, the so-called presidential elections in South Ossetia and the so-called parliamentary elections in Abkhazia constitute grave setbacks to efforts to make progress. We call on the Russian Federation to grant immediate and unrestricted access to the regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Finally, we hope that all parties will use the Geneva discussions as the forum to discuss and make progress on humanitarian issues. The United Kingdom is pleased to support the important draft resolution. We will vote in favour, and we will urge all other Member States to give the draft resolution the backing that it deserves.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.71, entitled "Status of internally

displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia".

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Albania, Andorra, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Belgium, Belize, Bulgaria, Canada, Central African Republic, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Latvia, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States of), Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Palau, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Tuvalu, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Yemen

Against:

Armenia, Belarus, Burundi, Cuba, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nauru, Nicaragua, Philippines, Russian Federation, South Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Abstaining:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Serbia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Tunisia,

Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia

The draft resolution was adopted by 80 votes to 14, with 61 abstentions (resolution 71/290).

[Subsequently, the delegations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Sudan informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote against; the delegations of the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan informed the Secretariat that they had intended to abstain.]

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): As in previous years, Chile has abstained in the voting on the text adopted today because it believes that it may prejudice or influence the consideration of issues that should be settled through the relevant negotiations in Geneva. Chile supports the quest for a peaceful, consensus-based solution reached either through talks in Geneva or another forum that ensures that the process will be impartial, in particular to prevent the politicization of purely humanitarian situations or the multilateralization of issues subject to mediation. In that regard, we urge the parties to redouble their efforts in their quest for a solution to the conflict.

Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Mayer Napoleão (Brazil): Brazil has consistently abstained in the voting on the draft resolution concerning internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as we believe that the text may prejudice or influence the consideration of sensitive issues that should be resolved by the relevant negotiations in Geneva. We urge all actors to seek lasting solutions to the situation of internally displaced persons and refugees, to create favourable, political conditions for their return and to dispel fears about the resumption of conflict.

Brazil recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia and expects that the dispute between Georgia and the Russian Federation can be resolved peacefully and through dialogue in the shortest term. We urge all parties concerned to pursue further cooperation and adopt confidence-building measures, including in the framework of the Geneva process.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

The representative of Georgia has asked for the floor to make a statement.

Mr. Imnadze (Georgia): I should like to thank all delegations that acted on conscience and on the principles that the Assembly stands for.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 32?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-first session

86th plenary meeting
Friday, 2 June 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 112 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(a) Election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council

The President: Before electing five non-permanent members of the Security Council for the 2018-2019 term, the Assembly will first proceed to the by-election to elect a non-permanent member of the Security Council, in accordance with rule 140 of the rules of procedure. The election of five non-permanent members of the Council will take place immediately following this by-election.

I would like to draw the attention of members to document A/71/896, which contains the text of a letter dated 2 May 2017 from the Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly. In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Austria, in his capacity as Chair of the Group of Western European and other States, announces that Italy will relinquish its seat on the Security Council effective at the end of the day — midnight — on 31 December 2017, and that, for the required by-election, the Netherlands is the endorsed and only candidate of the Group of Western European and other States for the remainder of the term. As a result, a vacancy will occur, and a new non-permanent member must therefore be elected to fill the unexpired term of office of Italy, commencing on 1 January 2018 and expiring on 31 December 2018.

Apart from the permanent members, Sweden is a non-permanent member of the Security Council in the year 2018 from among the Group of Western European and other States. Therefore, the name of that State, in addition to Italy, which will relinquish its seat, should not appear on the ballot papers.

Pursuant to paragraph 3 resolution 1991 A (XVIII), of 17 December 1963, the non-permanent member should be elected from among the Group of Western European and other States. I should like to inform the Assembly that the candidate receiving the greatest number of votes and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting will be declared elected. If none of the candidates obtains a two-thirds majority, there shall be additional ballots, the voting being restricted to the two candidates obtaining the greatest number of votes in the previous ballot. Also, consistent with past practice, in the case of a tie vote, and when it becomes necessary to determine the candidate that will proceed to the next round of restricted balloting, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to these procedures?

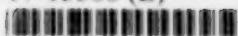
It was so decided.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt on a point of order.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): My delegation has requested the floor before the by-election in order to state its position on this precedent.

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We have trust in and support the candidate for the seat from among the Group of Western European and other States. Nonetheless, we would like to point out that the Charter of the United Nations stipulates very clearly that the duration of the mandate for a non-permanent member of the Security Council is two years. That provision has been fully respected by all Member States to have been elected to the Security Council as non-permanent members since 1964. This new precedent could therefore have a negative impact on an organ that is responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security.

Accordingly, we believe that the special agreement between Italy and the Netherlands to share a two-year mandate between the two countries is an exceptional arrangement based on a bilateral agreement between those two countries, and it should not be considered as setting a future precedent in electing non-permanent members of the Security Council.

The President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting. In addition, ballot papers will be given only to the representative seated directly behind the country's name plate.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

I would like to remind members that, at this stage, they are voting in the by-election for the one non-permanent seat from among the Group of Western European and other States. The election of five non-permanent members of the Council will take place immediately following this by-election.

Ballot papers are now being distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that have been distributed and to write on the ballot the name of the one State for which they wish to vote. A ballot will be declared invalid if it contains the name of more than one Member State from among the Group of Western European and other States.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldoseri (Bahrain), Mrs. Coto-Ramirez (Costa Rica),

Ms. Rits (Estonia), Mrs. Edwards (Guyana), Ms. O'Brien (Ireland) and Ms. Lahmiri (Morocco) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.50 a.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

<i>Western European and other States</i>	
Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	4
Number of valid ballots:	188
Abstentions:	
Number of members voting:	184
Required two-thirds majority:	123
Number of votes obtained:	
Netherlands	184

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority and the largest number of votes, the Netherlands was elected as a member of the Security Council for a term beginning on 1 January 2018 and ending on 31 December 2018.

The President: I congratulate the Netherlands on its election as a member of the Security Council.

I would request members to remain in their seats in order to proceed with the election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council. There will be an opportunity for representatives to extend their congratulations to the Netherlands immediately following the adjournment of today's meeting.

The General Assembly will next proceed to the election of five non-permanent members of the Security Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2017. The five outgoing non-permanent members are the following: Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay. Those five States cannot be re-elected. Their names should therefore not appear on the ballot papers.

Members will recall that Italy relinquished its non-permanent seat on the Security Council, effective 1 January 2018, and that the Netherlands has just been elected to fill that vacancy.

Apart from the five permanent members, the Security Council will include the following States in the year 2018: the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Ethiopia,

Kazakhstan, the Netherlands and Sweden. The names of those States should therefore also not appear on the ballot papers. Of the five non-permanent members that will remain in office in the year 2018, two are from among African and Asia-Pacific States, one is from among Latin American and Caribbean States and two are from among Western European and other States. Consequently, pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 1991 A (XVIII), of 17 December 1963, the five non-permanent members should be elected according to the following pattern: three from African and Asia-Pacific States, one from Eastern European States and one from Latin American and Caribbean States. The ballot papers reflect this pattern.

In accordance with established practice, there is an understanding to the effect that, of the three States to be elected from among the African and Asia-Pacific States, two should be from Africa and one should be from the Asia-Pacific region.

I should like to inform the Assembly that those candidates — their number not to exceed the number of seats to be filled — receiving the greatest number of votes and a two-thirds majority of those present and voting will be declared elected. If the number of candidates obtaining a two-thirds majority is less than the number of members to be elected, there shall be additional ballots to fill the remaining places, the voting being restricted to the candidates obtaining the greatest number of votes in the previous ballot to a number not more than twice the places remaining to be filled.

Also, consistent with past practice, in the case of a tie vote, and when it becomes necessary to determine the candidate that will proceed to the next round of restricted balloting, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to these procedures?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding candidatures, I have been informed by the Chairs of the respective regional groups of the following: for the three vacant seats from among the African and Asia-Pacific States, there are three endorsed candidates, namely, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial

Guinea and Kuwait. For the one vacant seat from among the Eastern European States, there is one endorsed candidate, namely, Poland. For the one vacant seat from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, there is one endorsed candidate, namely, Peru.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting. In addition, ballot papers will be given only to the representative seated directly behind the country's name plate.

We shall now begin the voting process. Members are requested to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B" and "C" will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers that have been distributed. I would ask representatives to write on the ballot papers marked "A", for the African and Asia-Pacific States, the names of the three States for which they wish to vote; on the ballot papers marked "B", for the Eastern European States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote; and on the ballot papers marked "C", for the Latin American and Caribbean States, the name of the one State for which they wish to vote.

A ballot will be declared invalid if it contains more names of Member States from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it. A ballot will also be declared invalid if all the names of the Member States on that ballot do not belong to the relevant region.

If a ballot paper of a region includes both the names of Member States that belong to and that are from outside of that region, the ballot remains valid but only the names of the Member States that belong to the relevant region will be counted. The names of Member States that do not belong to that region will not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aldoseri (Bahrain), Mrs. Coto-Ramirez (Costa Rica), Ms. Riis (Estonia), Mrs. Edwards (Guyana), Ms. O'Brien (Ireland) and Ms. Lahmiri (Morocco) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at noon.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — African and Asia-Pacific States (3 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	192
Required two-thirds majority:	128
Number of votes obtained:	
Côte d'Ivoire	189
Kuwait	188
Equatorial Guinea	185
Morocco	1
Guinea	1

Group B — Eastern European States (1 seat)

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	2
Number of members voting:	190
Required two-thirds majority:	127
Number of votes obtained:	

Poland 190

Group C — Latin American and Caribbean States (1 seat)

Number of ballot papers:	192
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	192
Abstentions:	5
Number of members voting:	187
Required two-thirds majority:	125
Number of votes obtained:	
Peru	186
Argentina	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority and the largest number of votes, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru and Poland were elected members of the Security Council for a two-year term beginning on 1 January 2018.

The President: I congratulate the States that have been elected members of the Security Council. I thank the tellers for their assistance in this election.

This concludes our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 112.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-first session

87th plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 June 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 112 (continued)

Elections to fill vacancies in principal organs

(b) Election of eighteen members of the Economic and Social Council

The President: The General Assembly will now proceed to by-elections to elect members of the Economic and Social Council, in accordance with rule 140 of the rules of procedure.

I would first like to draw the attention of members to documents A/71/923 and A/71/924, which contain the texts of letters, dated 19 May and 8 June 2017 respectively, from the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Romania to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly.

In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Romania, in his capacity as Chair of the Group of Eastern European States for the month of June, announces that Bosnia and Herzegovina will relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for its remaining term in favour of Romania, as of 31 December 2017.

In his letter, the Permanent Representative of Austria, in his capacity as Chair of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of May, announces that Australia will relinquish its seat on the Economic and Social Council for its remaining term in favour of Canada, as of 31 December 2017, and that Sweden will relinquish its seat on the Economic

and Social Council for its remaining term in favour of Denmark, as of 31 December 2017.

As a result, three vacancies will occur and new members must therefore be elected to fill the unexpired terms of office of Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sweden, commencing on 1 January 2018 and expiring on 31 December 2018, in the case of Australia, and 31 December 2019, in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sweden.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of resolution 2847 (XXVI), of 20 December 1971, and taking into account the number of States that will remain members of the Council after 1 January 2017, the members should be elected as follows: one from among the Group of Eastern European States and two from among the Group of Western European and other States. The ballot papers reflect that pattern.

I should like to inform the Assembly that those candidates — their number not exceeding the number of seats to be filled — that receive a two-thirds majority and the greatest number of votes by members present and voting will be declared elected. Consistent with past practice, in the case of a tie vote making it necessary to determine the candidate to be elected or that will proceed to the next round of restricted balloting, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to these procedures?

It was so decided.

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The President: In accordance with rule 92 of the Assembly's rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed accordingly.

I should like to inform members that, as of 1 January 2018, the following States from among the Group of Eastern European States and the Group of Western European and other States will be represented on the Economic and Social Council: Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Italy, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. The names of those 10 States should therefore not appear on the ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting. In addition, ballot papers will be given only to the representative seated directly behind the country's name plate.

We shall now begin the voting process. I request representatives to remain seated until all ballots have been collected.

I should like to remind members that they are voting in the by-election for one seat for the Eastern European States and two seats for the Western European and other States. The election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council will take place immediately following the by-election.

Ballot papers marked "A" and "B" will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers and to write on them the names of the States for which they wish to vote. A ballot will be declared invalid if it contains more names of Member States from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it. A ballot will also be declared invalid if none of the names of the Member States on that ballot belongs to the relevant region. If a ballot paper of a region contains both the names of Member States that belong to and that are outside that region, the ballot remains valid but only the names of the Member States that belong to the relevant region will be counted. The names of Member States that do not belong to that region will not be counted.

The meeting was suspended at 10.20 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.

The President: The result of the voting is as follows:

Group A — Eastern European States (1 seat)

Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	186
Abstentions:	4
Number of members voting:	182
Required two-thirds majority:	122
Number of votes obtained:	
Romania	172
Belarus	9
Bulgaria	1

Group B — Western European and other States (2 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	186
Number of invalid ballots:	2
Number of valid ballots:	184
Abstentions:	9
Number of members voting:	175
Required two-thirds majority:	117
Number of votes obtained:	
Denmark	167
Canada	166
France	4
Germany	3
Spain	3
Turkey	3
Ireland	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority, Canada, Denmark and Romania were elected members of the Economic and Social Council for a term of office beginning on 1 January 2018 and ending on 31 December 2018, in the case of Canada, and 31 December 2019, in the cases of Denmark and Romania.

The President: I congratulate Canada, Denmark and Romania on having been elected members of the Economic and Social Council.

The General Assembly will next turn to the election of 18 members of the Economic and Social Council to replace those members whose term of office expires on 31 December 2017.

The 18 outgoing members are: Argentina, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Estonia, France, Germany, Ghana, Honduras, India, Ireland, Japan, Mauritania, Pakistan,

Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Pursuant to rule 146 of the rules of procedure, those countries are eligible for immediate re-election.

Members will recall that Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Sweden relinquished their seats in the Economic and Social Council effective 1 January 2018, and that Canada, Denmark and Romania have just been elected to fill those vacancies.

Consequently, as of 1 January 2018, the following States will be represented on the Economic and Social Council: Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Benin, Cameroon, Canada, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Guyana, Iraq, Italy, Lebanon, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Somalia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tajikistan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and Viet Nam. The names of those 36 States should therefore not appear on the ballots.

In accordance with paragraph 4 of resolution 2847 (XXVI), of 20 December 1971, and taking into account the number of States that will remain members of the Council after 1 January 2018, the 18 members should be elected as follows: five from among the Group of African States, three from among the Group of Asia-Pacific States, one from among the Group of Eastern European States, four from among the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States and five from among the Group of Western European and other States. The ballot papers reflect that pattern.

I should like to inform the Assembly that those candidates, their number not exceeding the number of seats to be filled, who receive a two-thirds majority and the greatest number of votes by members present and voting will be declared elected.

Also, consistent with past practice, in case that due to a tie vote it becomes necessary to determine the candidate to be elected or to proceed to the next round of restricted balloting, there will be a special restricted ballot limited to those candidates that have obtained an equal number of votes.

May I take it that the General Assembly agrees to these procedures?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot, and there shall be no nominations.

Regarding candidatures for the respective regional groups, the Secretariat has been informed that for the five vacant seats from among the Group of African States, the Group has endorsed five candidates: Ghana, Malawi, Morocco, the Sudan and Togo. For the three vacant seats from among the Group of Asia-Pacific States, the Group has endorsed three candidates: India, Japan and the Philippines. For the one vacant seat from among the Group of Eastern European States, the Group has endorsed one candidate: Belarus.

For the four vacant seats from among the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Group has endorsed four candidates: Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico and Uruguay. For the five vacant seats from among the Group of Western European and other States, the Group has endorsed five candidates: France, Germany, Ireland, Spain and Turkey.

In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, we shall now proceed to the election by secret ballot.

Before we begin the voting process, I should like to remind members that, pursuant to rule 88 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, no representative shall interrupt the voting except on a point of order on the actual conduct of the voting. In addition, ballot papers will be given only to the representative seated directly behind the country's name plate.

We shall now begin the voting process.

Ballot papers marked "A", "B", "C", "D" and "E" will now be distributed. I request representatives to use only those ballot papers and to write on them the names of the States for which they wish to vote. A ballot will be declared invalid if it contains more names of Member States from the relevant region than the number of seats assigned to it. A ballot will also be declared invalid if none of the names of the Member States on that ballot belong to the relevant region.

If a ballot paper of a region contains both the names of the Member States that belong to and that are outside of that region, the ballot remains valid, but only the names of the Member States that belong to the relevant region will be counted. The names of Member States that do not belong to that region will not be counted.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Regis (Haiti), Ms. Vangansuren (Mongolia), Ms. Schot (New Zealand), Mr. Jamal-Hariri (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Ramazanov (Ukraine) and Mr. Phiri (Zambia) acted as tellers.

A vote was taken by secret ballot.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

The President: The results of the voting are as follows:

Group A — African States (5 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	188
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	188
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	188
Required two-thirds majority:	126
Number of votes obtained:	
Malawi	184
Togo	184
Ghana	183
Morocco	177
Sudan	175
Tunisia	1
Zambia	1

Group B — Asian and Pacific States (3 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	188
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number valid ballots:	188
Abstentions:	0
Number of members voting:	188
Required two-thirds majority:	126
Number of votes obtained:	
Japan	185
India	183
Philippines	182
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1
Pakistan	1

Group C — Eastern European States (1 seat)

Number of ballot papers:	188
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	188
Abstentions:	3
Number of members voting:	185

Required two-thirds majority:	124
Number of votes obtained:	
Belarus	182
Estonia	1
Montenegro	1
Ukraine	1

Group D — Latin American and Caribbean States (4 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	188
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	188
Abstentions:	1
Number of members voting:	187
Required two-thirds majority:	125
Number of votes obtained:	
Ecuador	182
Mexico	182
El Salvador	181
Uruguay	180
Cuba	2

Group E — Western European and other States (5 seats)

Number of ballot papers:	188
Number of invalid ballots:	0
Number of valid ballots:	188
Abstentions:	3
Number of members voting:	185
Required two-thirds majority:	124
Number of votes obtained:	
Germany	182
Spain	181
Ireland	180
Turkey	179
France	177
Israel	1
Liechtenstein	1
Switzerland	1

Having obtained the required two-thirds majority and the largest number of votes of the members of the General Assembly, the following 18 States were elected members of the Economic and Social Council for a three-year term beginning on 1 January 2018: Belarus, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Ireland, Japan, Malawi, Mexico, Morocco, the Philippines, Spain, the Sudan, Togo, Turkey and Uruguay.

The President: I congratulate those States that have been elected members of the Economic and Social Council and I thank the tellers for their assistance.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 112.

Agenda item 118

The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Draft resolution (A/71/L.66)

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/918)

The President: Before proceeding to consider draft resolution A/71/L.66, I would like to remind members that the debate on agenda item 118 will take place at a later date, to be announced.

The General Assembly meets today to renew its

“unwavering commitment to strengthening international cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations”

and to reaffirm

“that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed”.

It is in the spirit of that commitment that the draft resolution establishing the Office of Counter-Terrorism is presented today. The draft resolution will enhance the capability of the United Nations to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy across its four pillars by ensuring greater coordination and coherence across the Organization's system and by improving visibility, advocacy and resource mobilization for United Nations counter-terrorism efforts. I would like to thank all delegations for working cooperatively and constructively throughout the consultation process and for supporting my Office in securing today's draft resolution, the first major institutional reform presented by Secretary-General Guterres, and I commend it to the Assembly.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.66, entitled “Strengthening the capability of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy”.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/71/L.66?

Draft resolution A/71/L.66 was adopted (resolution 71/291).

The President: Before giving the floor to those wishing to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted, I would like to remind delegations that statements are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Grant (Canada): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia and New Zealand as well as my own country, Canada. We welcome the General Assembly's adoption today of resolution 71/291 and its creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism and a position for a new Under-Secretary-General. This update of the United Nations architecture comes after our three countries have worked for a number of years advocating that the Organization's counter-terrorism structures be made fit for purpose. We see these changes as contributing to the Secretary-General's overall objective of improving the focus of the prevention efforts of the United Nations.

Today's resolution comes at a time when we all face the evolving threat that terrorism represents, and we need to work together even harder than before to prevent and respond to it and to violent extremism. We look forward to seeing the Office established and the Under-Secretary-General selected as soon as possible. It is critical to ensure that the new Office will oversee a balanced implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, including the prevention of violent extremism. As we have said before, we expect the position to be filled by a senior, highly qualified and credible individual in the field. It is imperative to ensure that the individual selected has experience across the key sectors of development, human rights and security. Simply put, we need the best person for the job.

Canada, Australia and New Zealand look forward to working with the new Office and Under-Secretary-General in the coming months.

Mr. Sinirlioglu (Turkey): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Mexico, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, Turkey and Australia (MIKTA). MIKTA is a cross-regional partnership of five countries of diverse cultures and regions that share core values and similarities and are like-minded on many of the global challenges we face today. Of those

challenges, terrorism and violent extremism, in all their forms and manifestations, present a global threat to which no country is immune. As a result, MIKTA has established counter-terrorism as one of its core areas of collaboration in contributing to greater global peace and stability. Bearing that in mind, at their eighth meeting, held in Sydney in November 2016, the MIKTA Foreign Ministers adopted their latest communiqué, reaffirming their collective resolve to counter and prevent terrorism and violent extremism. The Foreign Ministers furthermore stated that they stood united against that scourge, which knows no borders, respects no beliefs and has no respect for human rights. Indeed, terrorism and violent extremism cannot and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. The MIKTA countries, which play a pivotal role in United Nations global counter-terrorism efforts, therefore welcome today's adoption of resolution 71/291, on reform of the United Nations global counter-terrorism architecture and the establishment of a United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism, to be led by an Under-Secretary-General.

We would like to express our full support for the Secretary-General's initiative and his commitment to adapting the United Nations system to the ever-evolving threat of terrorism. They herald his first a major institutional reform of the United Nations since he took office. In that regard, the MIKTA countries would like to stress the importance of delivering counter-terrorism capacity-building assistance to Member States, at their request, in a timely, adequate and effective manner, and to emphasize that the new Office of Counter-Terrorism would not be empowered to monitor, supervise or interfere with efforts by Member States to implement the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the rest of the international legal framework with regard to counter-terrorism.

The MIKTA countries would like to express their sincere hope that the present reform will contribute to the balanced implementation of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy across its four pillars; enhance strategic coordination and the coherence of United Nations counter-terrorism activities, both within the United Nations system and with relevant external actors, in order to create synergies and avoid duplication; ensure respect for international law, including international human rights law; continue to guide United Nations counter-terrorism efforts; and ensure that the voice of the United

Nations on issues regarding counter-terrorism and the prevention of violent extremism will be better heard in the international community. With that understanding, and with the ultimate goal of defeating the scourge of terrorism, MIKTA countries look forward to swift implementation of the reform and today's resolution, and to constructive engagement with the new United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation joined the consensus this morning. From the outset, we have supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General with regard to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations counter-terrorism system. That springs from our belief that this topic should be a priority, since terrorism is the number-one threat to peace and security all over the world. The recommendations of the Secretary-General in that regard, especially for the creation of an Office of Counter-Terrorism, to be headed by a new Under-Secretary-General, are a quantum leap forward in addressing that universal threat. They coincide exactly with the requests that Syria has been making for decades, especially concerning the terrorism that we have been enduring and that is funded, managed and condoned by the Governments of some Member States.

However, at the same time my Government is of the view that the Office of Counter-Terrorism can be independent and truly efficient only if it is totally free of the politicization and financial polarization that are used by the Governments of certain Member States to serve their own interests and agendas and that would ultimately be an obstacle to the goals of the Office. That is why my delegation has reservations about paragraph 3 of resolution 71/291, adopted this morning. We reiterate our determination to reconsider that paragraph during any periodic or regular revision of the resolution, whether in the Fifth or Sixth Committee. It is a very serious and unjustified precedent that confers on the Government of a certain State some prerogatives and privileges in the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre at a time when, as everyone knows, that country is itself contributing to terrorism.

The provisions of paragraph 3 are an offence to the collective work of the United Nations because they run counter to the purposes and principles of its Charter, and that is why we are shocked at the Centre's double standards. There is no way that it should receive more than \$100 million in funds from the Saudi system and regime when that same regime persistently violates

Security Council resolutions by providing armed terrorist groups in Syria with billions of dollars, as well as by spending hundreds of millions of dollars in centres all over the world that claim to be taking up the call for religion when they are actually advocating for Wahhabi extremism and working to sow the seeds of sectarianism in our countries. Those infamous Saudi centres have been recruiting thousands of young people and sending them as foreign terrorist combatants to fight in the ranks of Da'esh, the Al-Nusra Front and the other relevant terrorist groups.

In various United Nations forums, in various reports that we have submitted, and in the information that we have provided to various United Nations agencies, we have reiterated the facts about the support of certain Member States, such as Saudi Arabia, for terrorism in Syria. They are not mere political accusations but facts known to everyone, and they have even been confirmed by certain reports issued by various committees and institutions.

What we are witnessing today in the Gulf area and in all the disagreements going on between Gulf regimes is a demonstration of the practices of those regimes, which have an insatiable desire to destroy our States and manipulate the futures and destinies of people. They use terrorism as a tool to advance their own agendas and interests with complete disregard for global security and stability.

We have also said that terrorism knows no religion and has no identity. However, the most dangerous enemy for Arabs and Muslims today is the race between Saudi Arabia and Qatar to use political Islam in a way that offends both Arabs and Islam. What they are really engaged in is a race of hypocrisy. In that regard, I would like to quote the writer Fareed Zakaria in *The Washington Post*:

"It's true that Qatar has supported some extremist Islamist movements. So has Saudi Arabia. Both are Wahhabi countries, both have within them extremist preachers, and both are widely believed to have armed Islamist groups in Syria and elsewhere. In both cases, the royal families play a game of allying themselves with fundamentalist religious forces and funding some militants, even while fighting other violent groups."

Donating \$100 million for the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre or spending more than \$500 billion on arms and weapons will never absolve

the Saudi regime of its support of terrorism and its adoption of violent extremism, which has spilled the blood of thousands upon thousands of innocent people in my country, Syria, and which continues to claim hundreds of lives all over the world.

Finally, my Government is hopeful and confident that the new Under-Secretary-General appointed to head the Office of Counter-Terrorism will be careful, neutral, efficient and comprehensive and that the Under-Secretary-General will be from a country that respects the shared principles and the rules of procedure of the Organization, in particular with regard to sovereign equality and rights among Member States. We are also confident that the new Under-Secretary-General will reject double standards and avoid political and financial tension and polarization, while observing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): I am taking the floor to congratulate you, Sir, and your Office on bringing this process to a swift and expeditious conclusion, resulting in today's adoption of resolution 71/291. I also take this opportunity to compliment the Secretary-General on his earnest efforts on the issue.

This is the first of the Secretary-General's reform initiatives, which has come to fruition through the General Assembly. The Assembly's unanimity on the issue demonstrates the importance that Member States give to collective and coordinated action on terrorism, which remains the most complex threat that the international community faces. India believes that the creation of the Office of Counter-Terrorism is a long-awaited first step in our efforts to enhance the coordination of United Nations counter-terrorism efforts. It will align the Organization with the changed global reality and the international community's needs, as the Secretary-General himself articulated yesterday in Kabul — a city ravaged by terrorists. He mentioned the reform and said that support for terrorism carried a very high price.

Terrorist networks are not limited by the borders, norms, legal frameworks or bureaucratic inertia that constrain us as Member States and the United Nations at all levels. While terrorist networks use modern platforms such as social media and cyberspace, and exist in parallel worlds alongside us in hidden transnational networks, we cannot work in silos created either by boundaries or by bureaucracy. There was

never a stronger case for more multilateral action, coordination and cooperation on any matter among all stakeholders than with regard to terrorism today. An all-of-United Nations approach and a certain convening power on counter-terrorism issues will be crucial if the new Office of Counter-Terrorism is to fulfil its functions effectively.

The Office should not only engage Member States at a high political level, it should also cooperate with other international organizations dealing with issues relating to terrorism in order to fulfil its mandate effectively. It is also important to build the United Nations narrative on counter-terrorism for the ordinary people who are threatened by this scourge. It is now time to reap the benefits of the early harvest of reform. For its part, in that regard, India will continue to work with other Member States to guide and steer the steps of the United Nations as part of the international community's collective response to one of the gravest challenges facing humankind today.

Mr. Kravik (Norway): Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his efforts to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. I should also like to thank the Office of the President of the General Assembly for working so tirelessly and expeditiously to ensure today's adoption of resolution 71/291, establishing the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism.

More than ever, we need an effective, cohesive and adaptable United Nations that is equipped to counter and tackle the challenges posed by terrorism and violent extremism. The creation of the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism represents a major step forward in that regard. Headed by an Under-Secretary-General reporting directly to the Secretary-General, the Office will give the United Nations more coherence and provide for better strategic leadership and external and internal communication. It will promote the United Nations system's ability to implement all four pillars of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a cohesive and coordinated way. Our ability to mobilize resources and support from Member States through capacity-building efforts and the sharing of best practices will be manifestly enhanced.

Since 2006, when the United Nations adopted its Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, there has been too much emphasis on combating terrorism by military

and security means. We must also address the root causes and upstream factors of violent extremism, as highlighted by the Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. The responsibilities of the Under-Secretary-General and the Office will be to ensure an appropriate balance and emphasis across all four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. We therefore appreciate the fact that the mandate of the Office of Counter-Terrorism includes a reference to preventing the violent extremism agenda.

As part of its efforts to counter terrorism and violent extremism, the Office must work to advance peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and the rule of law, and to institutionalize the prevention of violent extremism across the United Nations system. We also believe that it must partner and interact with civil society and other non-governmental stakeholders in order to be effective. One key qualification for the position of Under-Secretary-General should be that the successful candidate will have experience in both development and security and a demonstrated ability to work inclusively, cooperating effectively with a range of stakeholders, including civil society actors.

Mr. Nasimfar (Islamic Republic of Iran): We joined the consensus on resolution 71/291, which we have just adopted. Indeed, we support the principle of the initiative of the Secretary-General in bringing reform to the counter-terrorism structure and creating the Office of Counter-Terrorism, headed by an Under-Secretary-General. The new structure has the potential to enhance the coordination of counter-terrorism-related activities across the United Nations system and to expand United Nations capacity for addressing the root causes of terrorism and violent extremism better and more effectively. However, in our view, further structural improvement is still needed to ensure the efficiency, impartiality, transparency and predictability of the activities of the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

In our view, resolution 71/291 fails to address the following issues. First, it is imperative that sufficient financial resources for the Office of Counter-Terrorism be allocated from the United Nations regular budget. We note with concern that in the new structure most of the positions will be funded through voluntary funds, which could seriously imperil the impartiality and efficiency of the Office of Counter-Terrorism. Secondly, transparency and inclusiveness are among the core United Nations principles that should be upheld and mainstreamed in all areas of United Nations

counter-terrorism activities — including the United Nations Centre for Counter-Terrorism (UNCCT) and its Advisory Board.

In our view, the UNCCT should be reformed in order to clearly reflect those main principles. Given the Centre's important role in providing capacity-building projects to Member States, transparency and inclusiveness in its Advisory Board should be guaranteed. We are of the view that the Centre should be bound by United Nations rules and regulations. The Centre might have seen some exceptions in that regard at its inception, but after years of operation under the United Nations system, it must be brought up to the level of other regular United Nations entities.

We are of the view that the members of the Advisory Board should be elected in a transparent process following consultations with regional groups and after meeting specific conditions set by the Assembly. That would meet the basic requirement for equal opportunity for the entire United Nations membership in connection with active participation and effective engagement in its activities, and would pave the way for more voluntary and other forms of support from a larger percentage of the general membership.

For the sake of transparency, it is important that the terms of reference of the Office be negotiated by Member States and adopted by the General Assembly. We would therefore expect the members of the Advisory Board to be elected in April 2018 in accordance with the transparently negotiated terms of reference.

Mr. Roet (Israel): My delegation would first like to offer its condolences to the families of the victims of the shocking terror attacks that have recently taken place around the globe in the United Kingdom, Egypt, Somalia and many other places, and that have once again shaken our world to its core. The countless lives lost every day to terror makes that threat the top priority of almost every country represented in this Hall. As terrorism grows, our common responsibility to defeat it together grows ever more urgent.

Israel welcomes today's adoption by consensus of resolution 71/291, which establishes the Office of Counter-Terrorism, to be led by an Under-Secretary-General. We thank Secretary-General Guterres for taking a strong stand against the constant threat of terror around the world. His efforts and insistence in establishing the new Office are a step in the right direction. We would also like to express our appreciation

for the constructive and transparent way in which the process was conducted. We also extend our gratitude to you, Mr. President, and your Office for your tireless work in promoting this resolution. We have discussed the fragmented nature of the Organization's counter-terrorism strategy here in the Hall. Although 38 United Nations entities are working to combat terrorism, we lack an overarching voice to guide their efforts. This resolution has the potential to be that voice, and we look forward to working closely with it.

The new counter-terrorism architecture will not only improve efficiency and coherence, it can also help turn the United Nations into a relevant actor in overcoming the challenges that terrorism poses in the twenty-first century. But that goal can be achieved only if we do not surrender to the attempt to politicize the issue. Terror is terror, and we must respond with the same urgency and vigilance wherever it strikes, whether it be through the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Hizbullah, Boko Haram, Hamas or any other terror group. Our response must grow alongside the constantly evolving terror tactics of those organizations. Terror is terror, wherever it is.

Israel has dealt with the threat of terror since its inception in 1948. Out of that daily necessity, we have become expert in counter-terrorism and have developed technologies and tools for counter-terrorism unmatched by almost any other country. We understand and recognize that the only way to combat that threat is by staying ahead of the game and anticipating the terrorists' next step. We in the international community must do the same and act together to combat the terror threat of tomorrow. Serious international threats require serious international responses. Only if we stand united can we defeat global terrorism and stop those who seek to undermine our way of life.

Mr. Al-Mouallimi (Saudi Arabia): The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia commends the Secretary-General for giving priority to strengthening the United Nations counter-terrorism capability in order to assist Member States in implementing the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced and comprehensive manner. We thank him and you, Sir, for the consultative approach that you have taken throughout the process of establishing the Office of Counter-Terrorism, and we support resolution 71/291, which we have just adopted.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognizes the need to enhance coherence and coordination across counter-terrorism activities carried out by the United Nations and, in that regard, views the establishment of the Office as a necessary step towards achieving that goal. As everyone knows, Saudi Arabia is heavily invested in the success of the overall United Nations counter-terrorism architecture. We are therefore pleased to see that the new Office will take on the current functions and responsibilities of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre and its Advisory Board. We are also pleased that all funding and contribution agreements between donors and the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre will remain dedicated to the execution of its intended projects and will not be diverted to other administrative requirements.

We look forward to a smooth transfer of counter-terrorism activities from the Department of Political Affairs to the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism. As Chair of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's group on counter-terrorism, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represents the group of countries most affected by the scourge of international terrorism, and we look forward to constructively and actively engaging with the Office of Counter-Terrorism.

It is also essential to reiterate that terrorism should not be associated with any religion, race or ethnicity. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia stands ready to share its insights and expertise to facilitate the effective functioning of the Office, and we will do our part to help ensure its early and sustained success.

(spoke in Arabic)

We have always insisted on distancing the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre from any kind of political pressure. It is with regret that we heard the statement made earlier by the representative of Syria who — as the Arab expression goes — infected us with a problem and left us with it. The Syrian regime is guilty of a number of human rights violations. It uses chemical weapons, missiles and barrel bombs. The Syrian regime resorts to torture and at times even collective torture. Such a regime has no place in a discussion on terrorism because its hands are stained with the blood of its own people.

The regime has been condemned by numerous resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, as well as by other United Nations bodies. Such attacks are unacceptable, and Syria is not in any position to make

them. Furthermore, the representative of Syria has no right to address issues concerning the Gulf. We call on Syria to end the terrorist attacks carried out by groups supported by the regime, including Hizbullah.

Concerning the statement by the representative of Iran, I wholeheartedly welcome his constructive remarks, in particular with regard to the need to support United Nations counter-terrorism activities in the framework of budgetary decisions, so as to ensure a greater level of transparency and respect for the norms of the United Nations. I would like to assure everyone that all those norms were respected within the framework of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Centre, which represents all countries. The Advisory Board is an independent body that has oversight over the Centre's activities and submits quarterly and annual reports to all members of the United Nations. The Advisory Board also welcomes all proposals and recommendations that would enhance transparency, as well as all proposals coming from countries that support the Centre's work. We thank the representative of Iran for his comments and assure him that the Centre will take them under consideration.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position. We shall now hear statements following the adoption of resolution 71/291.

I give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Adamson (European Union): We thank you, Mr. President, for facilitating today's adoption of resolution 71/291.

The European Union (EU) and its member States have contributed to the process constructively and substantively, and we are pleased that today we have taken this important institutional step. The establishment of the new Office of Counter-Terrorism should be seen as a necessary first step aimed at improving the role of the United Nations and its impact on countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism.

We welcome the fact that the new Under-Secretary-General and the Office of Counter-Terrorism are set to address the prevention of violent extremism as a core part of their responsibility for implementing the whole Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in a balanced manner, as stipulated in the Secretary-General's report (A/71/858). That also resonates with the overall prevention agenda of the Secretary-General, which the EU and its member States fully endorse. We strongly

support the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the new Office, headed by an Under-Secretary-General who will provide strategic leadership, participate in high-level decision-making at the United Nations and ensure that cross-cutting drivers of terrorism and violent extremism are taken into account in the work of the Organization. We are confident that the new Under-Secretary-General will be eminently qualified, with experience in counter-terrorism as well as United Nations policies, including those on human rights, gender equality and development.

Needless to say, it is important to have more effective and efficient coordination within the overall United Nations system and between the United Nations and other international organizations and forums. Within the mandates of the existing entities, it will be necessary to establish more linkages and foster a spirit of systematic cooperation, as well as to evaluate and monitor the impact of United Nations efforts in the future.

The EU and its member States want a strong and efficient United Nations, capable of driving the global agenda on counter-terrorism and preventing violent extremism while taking a balanced approach across the four pillars of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. To achieve that, we are committed to closely cooperating with the newly established Office of Counter-Terrorism and with the Under-Secretary-General, as soon as he or she is appointed.

The President: Before giving the floor to the speaker in exercise of the right of reply, may I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Al Arsan (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): In Syria we do not like proverbs, but it would appear that Saudi Arabia does. We are not manipulating the situation but rather attempting to state it clearly as it stands. Saudi Arabia must allow the Syrian people to enjoy their right to exercise their own rights. Saudi Arabia should not interfere in the domestic affairs of Syria and should stop financing terrorist groups, because they are promoting Wahhabi attacks. We note that that ideology is gaining ground. My country is a sovereign State. We have a Constitution and domestic legislation. We are not looking for revenge or to promote Wahhabi ideology. Our army and allies will continue to fight terrorism and the extremist Wahhabi ideology behind it, an ideology supported by Saudi Arabia and its allies.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 118.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-first session

88th plenary meeting

Thursday, 22 June 2017, 10 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency

Mr. Baldwin Lonsdale, President of the Republic of Vanuatu

The President: Before we proceed to the item on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late President of the Republic of Vanuatu, His Excellency Mr. Baldwin Lonsdale, who passed away on Saturday, 17 June.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I request the representative of Vanuatu to convey our condolences to the Government and the people of Vanuatu and to the bereaved family of Mr. Lonsdale.

This morning, we pay tribute to His Excellency President Womtelo Reverend Baldwin Lonsdale of the Republic of Vanuatu, who passed away suddenly on 17 June. President Lonsdale was greatly admired by his people and indeed across the Pacific for his just leadership, humility, dedication to country and his pride in Vanuatu and its people. He was a man of faith, an Anglican priest and a driving force for national unity. He was a champion for the role of women in Vanuatu's democracy, and a strong supporter for youth engagement in developing the nation.

The defining moment for a national leader is often how the leader responds in the face of national tragedy, disaster and upheaval. When the destructive force of Category 5 Cyclone Pam devastated Vanuatu in March 2015, it was President Lonsdale who became the global face for that tragedy. Speaking at the third United

Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, President Lonsdale pleaded for international humanitarian assistance for his country. He urged the world to recognize that such disasters could wipe out years of development and reduce people to a state of increased poverty overnight, and he called upon world leaders to assist by creating a sustainable development path for all.

President Lonsdale led by example in his commitment to ethical, responsible and proactive leadership. Indeed, upon his election in September 2014, President Lonsdale stated that

"my first and foremost priority is to make sure that the Constitution of the nation is upheld at all times and that peace, unity, justice and harmony prevail at all times".

His firm dedication to those high principles was demonstrated in late 2015, when he took quick and decisive action to uphold peace, democracy and the rule of law in Vanuatu. The late President carried out his presidential duties with dignity and respect, emerging as a much loved symbol of unity for his nation. He will be sorely missed.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I extend our most sincere condolences to the family of President Lonsdale and to the Government and the people of the Republic of Vanuatu.

I now request the members of the General Assembly to rise to observe a minute of silence in memory of the late President.

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The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Congo, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Bale (Congo): It is both an honour and a sad duty to take the floor today on behalf of the Group of African States to pay tribute to the memory of the President of Vanuatu His Excellency Mr. Baldwin Jacobson Lonsdale, whose death wrenched him from the love and affection of his people and his family at the age of 67, on 17 June.

As the General Assembly pays tribute to his memory, I should like, on behalf of the Group of African States and on my own behalf, to extend my sincere condolences to the people and the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu. My thoughts are with the family of the late President and the staff of the Permanent Mission of Vanuatu. The African Group shares in their grief following his tragic death. We extend our compassion and solidarity to them.

Reverend Baldwin Lonsdale was an Anglican priest and man of the cloth who dedicated his life to helping others and to God. He was a true statesman and the President of his country. In that prominent position, he looked out for the well-being of his people. He lived by values and principles that inspired the actions he took as the leader of his country. We can therefore state that the late President was a servant of God who served the men and women of his country, who in turn showered him with love and respect.

Because he knew that his country was vulnerable to the effects of climate change, President Lonsdale could be considered to be one of the outspoken heroes in fight against that phenomenon. We should recall his apt and firm statement following Cyclone Pam, which devastated his country. He believed that climate change was a contributing factor in the devastating force of a cyclone that decimated entire villages from that archipelago in the southern Pacific. He believed that climate change was real. May his soul rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Mongolia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mrs. Altangerel (Mongolia): I have the distinct honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States on this very special but

sombre occasion. On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I wish to express our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and the Government and the people of Vanuatu as they mourn the passing of a true statesman.

The people of Vanuatu have lost an outstanding leader. His Excellency Father Lonsdale served the people of Vanuatu with dignity and humility. He was a humble man dedicated to the principles of the rule of law and against the abuse of power. Father Lonsdale had worked as a senior civil servant, as Secretary General of the Torba provincial Government, and became an Anglican priest before his election as the President of Vanuatu in 2014.

This has been a dark week for the people of Vanuatu. The nation has lost a true statesman who showed us justice and hope. His life and service is now a part of Vanuatu's history. He served the people of Vanuatu with dignity. He will be remembered by many for his efforts to rebuild Vanuatu after the devastating Cyclone Pam, in 2015, and in the fight against corruption. We will remember his life with deep respect, cherishing the memory of his deep love and commitment to his country and to his people. He was an exemplary leader and a guardian of the pillars of justice, democracy and integrity. Those attitudes and approaches were deeply embedded in all that Father Lonsdale sought to achieve and will be carried forward in the legacy he bequeathed to us.

May God give comfort and peace and may his soul rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Romania, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Jinga (Romania): It is with great sorrow and regret that the members of the Group of Eastern European States learned about the sudden passing of the President of Vanuatu, Womtelo Reverend Baldwin Lonsdale, on 17 June.

Vanuatu lost one of its greatest leaders and a symbol of the country's unity. The late President Lonsdale became a symbol of hope for Vanuatu when Cyclone Pam caused severe damage in the country in early 2015. He successfully steered the country through internal upheaval, and he showed an outstanding commitment to justice and the rule of law. President Lonsdale's message will continue to inspire his people

in the defence of the ideals of justice and humanity. During this time of mourning, our thoughts and heartfelt sympathies are with the people of Vanuatu in remembering and honouring this great leader. May he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Honduras, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Ms. Flores (Honduras): On behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean States, I wish to convey our deepest condolences to the people of Vanuatu and the family a President Baldwin Jacobson Lonsdale, who passed away at the age of 67. Mr. Lonsdale was born in Mota Lava in the northern Banks Islands. He was a civil servant who served as Secretary General of Torba in the provincial Government before becoming an Anglican priest. He was elected to the presidency in September 2014 and vowed in his appointment to ensure that the Constitution of the nation would be upheld at all times, and that peace, unity, justice and harmony would always prevail.

In March 2015, amid the devastation of Cyclone Pam, a Category 5 storm that left thousands homeless and Vanuatu's infrastructure and crops destroyed, President Lonsdale became a pillar of stability. While attending the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, in March 2015, he called for climate change awareness and appealed for international assistance.

President Lonsdale oversaw the recovery and rebuilding of key sectors of Vanuatu, thereby uniting the population to start anew under a sustainable development agenda. He had unwavering devotion to the rule of law and a strong commitment to the empowerment of women. We join the people of Vanuatu in their sorrow and mourning of a devoted father and statesman. May he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

It was with profound sadness that we learned of the sudden loss of his Excellency President Baldwin Lonsdale on 17 June. On behalf of the Group, I would

like to express sincere condolences to his family and the Government and the people of Vanuatu.

President Lonsdale made a significant contribution to Vanuatu. He was an Anglican priest and served as Secretary General of Torba province before becoming the eighth President of the Republic of Vanuatu in September 2014 — the first from Torba province.

Following the destruction and devastation from Category 5 Cyclone Pam in March 2015, President Lonsdale appealed for international humanitarian support for his beloved homeland. Many will remember the emotional plea for assistance that President Lonsdale made at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan, shortly after the cyclone. He led his people through that traumatic event and was deeply committed to the humanitarian relief, recovery and ongoing rebuilding effort.

President Lonsdale was greatly admired across the Pacific region, particularly for his commitment to democratic principles, the rule of law, instilling pride in Vanuatu's culture and the empowerment of women. President Lonsdale recognized the vital role of women's participation in the nation's development and was a champion for greater representation of women in the country's Parliament. He will perhaps be best remembered for the decisive action that he took in 2015 to safeguard democracy, good governance and the rule of law, which led to snap elections early last year.

President Lonsdale represented Vanuatu on the world stage and served the people of Vanuatu with dignity and humility. He was much loved and respected. We know that Vanuatu will continue to honour his legacy of dedication to his people and country.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): On behalf of the United States as host country, I would like to extend its deep sympathy to the Government and the people of Vanuatu for the loss of President Baldwin Lonsdale.

President Lonsdale leaves behind a legacy of integrity and humility. Even before becoming President, he had a rich history as a man of service and as a man of faith. As a civil servant and Secretary General of the Torba provincial Government, President Lonsdale was committed to serving his community, and later after becoming a clergyman, he was able to make so

many valuable personal connections and deliver hope to so many.

Upon taking office, President Lonsdale expressed his desire to ensure that

“the Constitution of the nation is upheld at all times and that peace, unity, justice and harmony prevail at all times”.

That commendable goal was put into action during the very first year of his presidency. As we all remember, in March 2015 Vanuatu was devastated by Cyclone Pam, a Category 5 storm that left the country in a state of crisis. In the wake of that catastrophe, President Lonsdale made heartfelt appeals to the international community while imploring the world to provide much-needed assistance to the emergency situation in his country. He worked tirelessly to manage the devastation and personally guide efforts to rebuild the community that he cared about so deeply.

In October 2015, President Lonsdale acted decisively to ensure that the actions of a few did not compromise the integrity of Vanuatu's Government. That strident defence of democratic principles reflected his commitment to the rule of law. In times of crisis, President Lonsdale served as a pillar of stability for the people of Vanuatu, and he led his country with the surest of hands.

President Lonsdale was an exceptional man and an outstanding leader who was much loved by his people. The future of Vanuatu is brighter thanks to his leadership. We again offer our sincere condolences on his passing.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Vanuatu.

Mr. Tevi (Vanuatu): At the outset, please allow me, on behalf of the Government and the people of Vanuatu, and His Excellency the late President Baldwin Lonsdale, to thank you, Sir, for creating the space to pay tribute to the memory of our President. Allow me to also thank the international community for the torrent of heartfelt sympathy, grief and friendship expressed to our people at this difficult time.

Last weekend, Vanuatu lost one of its most beloved leaders. It has been a dark week for Vanuatu. His passing has marked an unprecedented outpouring of sympathy and grief across the world. Yet it is a grief combined with much admiration. Our late President grew up from

very humble beginnings. He was one of 11 children born of two hardworking and strict parents. Growing up, he was a peacemaker, always creating concords between fighting siblings and friends alike. It was no surprise to his parents and his community that, after he left high school and a subsequent four-year stint with the British National Services' Establishment Division, he decided to pursue tertiary education, eventually obtaining a diploma in Scholar of Theology from Bishop Patterson's College in Solomon Islands and a diploma with honours from Saint John's College, which is now a part of Auckland University in New Zealand.

The late President Lonsdale then served in various roles within the Anglican Church. He served as a teacher and principal of a rural training centre from 1987 to 1991, followed by serving as the National Youth Coordinator from 1991 to 1998. In 1998, he was appointed Secretary General of Torba province, a position he held for eight years. On 22 September 2014, he was elected to serve as the seventh President of the Republic of Vanuatu, a position he held until his untimely death on 17 June.

The late President Lonsdale will be remembered for his humility and dignity displayed through his God-fearing leadership and his unwavering Christian principles. He was a warrior of peace and was a strong symbol for unity in Vanuatu. He had a strong vision for the young generation of Vanuatu and was a strong advocate for women. He will be remembered by the international community for upholding the rule of law and the Vanuatu Constitution even when under political duress.

The late President's legacy as an educator, a religious leader, a promoter and an advocate for the advancement of youth and women and for standing up against corruption will no doubt be long remembered. Vanuatu will be searching for his qualities when his successor is elected. He is survived by all six of his children.

The Vanuatu Mission has opened a condolence book in honour of the late President. It will be open today and tomorrow and all are invited to sign it. I again convey my deepest gratitude to the international community for the outpouring of sympathy and condolences expressed to the family of our late President and to the Government and people of the Republic of Vanuatu. He has run a good race. May he rest in eternal peace.

Agenda item 87**Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965****Draft resolution (A/71/L.73)**

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Congo to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.73.

Mr. Balé (Congo): Pursuant to the inclusion of item 87 on the agenda of the General Assembly in September 2016, I have the honour to introduce, on behalf of the 54 African States Members of the United Nations, draft resolution A/71/L.73, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965", under the said agenda item.

The action initiated by the African States, in collaboration with the Government of Mauritius, at the level of the United Nations is in pursuit of the effort of all African States, including Mauritius, to complete the decolonization of Africa and to allow a State member of both the African Union and the United Nations to exercise its full sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago in accordance with international law and the right of self-determination.

The present submission echoes the African Union resolution on the Chagos archipelago, which stipulates that the excision of the Chagos archipelago from the territory of Mauritius by the former colonial Power prior to the independence of Mauritius is unlawful and, as a result, is a violation of international law and especially of resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and resolution 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, which prohibit colonial Powers from dismembering territory prior to granting independence. In addition, resolution 1514 (XV) specifies that any attempt aimed at the total or partial disruption of a national unity and the territorial integrity of a colonial country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Furthermore, resolution 2066 (XX), which deals specifically with Mauritius, called upon the United Kingdom to take no action that would dismember the territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity. The then administering Power was invited

to comply with the provisions of the resolutions and to take effective measures with a view to the immediate and full implementation of resolution 1514 (XV). More than five decades have passed and despite continued and repeated appeals made in international forums, including at the United Nations, the Chagos archipelago has yet to be returned to the effective control of Mauritius by the former administering Power.

In the resolutions adopted by the Assembly of the African Union in July 2015 and January 2017, respectively, following previous pertinent ones, the African Heads of State and Government reiterated their support to the Republic of Mauritius in its endeavour to complete its decolonization and effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago. In this context, following a request by the Government of the Republic of Mauritius, which was actively supported by the Group of African States, the General Assembly has decided to include on the agenda of its current session an item entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965".

However, at the request of the United Kingdom, the Republic of Mauritius agreed that consideration of the item be deferred until June 2017. The item was included by consensus by the General Assembly on its agenda following an understanding between Mauritius and the United Kingdom, facilitated by the president of the General Assembly, to defer, at the request of the United Kingdom, the consideration of the item until June 2017 in order to allow time to the concerned delegation to reach a solution on the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius. Unfortunately, there has been no progress in this discussion since neither party wished during the talks to focus on the central issue of decolonization, which is so essential to the successful outcome of the process. Therefore, it was clear that there could be no prospect of progress.

Draft resolution A/71/L.73 calls on the General Assembly to decide, in accordance with article 96 of the Charter of the United Nations, to request the International Court of Justice, pursuant to article 65 of the Statute of the Court, to render an advisory opinion on two issues. First, was the process of decolonization of Mauritius lawfully completed when Mauritius was granted independence in 1968, following the separation of Chagos archipelago from Mauritius, in contravention of international law and General Assembly resolutions?

Secondly, what are the consequences under international law arising from the continued administration by the United Kingdom of the Chagos archipelago, including the inability of Mauritius to implement programmes for the settlement of the Chagos archipelago of its nationals, in particular those of Chagossian origin?

As everyone is aware, the right to self-determination and the completion of the decolonization process continue to be a central concern of the United Nations as a whole. That is why we firmly believe that the United Nations would benefit from the guidance of a principal judicial organ of the United Nations on the decolonization process with respect to the two questions posed in the draft resolution. An advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice would assist the General Assembly in its work and would contribute to the promotion of the international rule of law.

Noting that no progress has been made since the issue of the Chagos archipelago was put on the United Nations agenda more than five decades ago, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, the Group of African States to the United Nations calls on all Member States to vote in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.73. The draft resolution is nothing but a request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965.

A "yes" vote will be a vote in favour of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, which continue to guide the Organization's efforts with respect to the principle of self-determination. The United Nations cannot continue to ignore the cry of Mauritius for justice.

Mr. Jugnauth (Mauritius): My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement that has just been made by the Permanent Representative of the Republic of the Congo on behalf of the African Group of States members of the African Union.

I am accompanied by Mauritians of Chagossian origin, who were forcibly evicted from the Chagos archipelago and who are putting all their hopes in the United Nations to uphold their ability to return to the archipelago, which the complete decolonization of Mauritius will allow.

I have been privileged to witness my country's political advancement, and was one of those — now the only survivor — who participated in the Mauritius

Constitutional Conference held in London in 1965, which was meant to pave the way for the independence of Mauritius in 1968. I am therefore personally aware of the circumstances under which the Chagos archipelago was excised from the territory of Mauritius prior to independence.

The Chagos archipelago has been part of the territory of Mauritius since at least the eighteenth century, at a time when Mauritius was a French colony. Throughout the period of French colonial rule, France governed the Chagos archipelago as one of the dependencies of Mauritius. All the islands forming part of Mauritius, including the Chagos archipelago, were ceded by France to the United Kingdom in 1810.

The administration of the Chagos archipelago as a constituent part of Mauritius continued without interruption throughout the period of British colonial rule until its unlawful excision from the territory of Mauritius on 8 November 1965. No one today can challenge that fact. That excision was carried out in blatant violation of international law and resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, containing the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, which called for a speedy and unconditional end to colonialism. The Declaration clearly stipulates that any attempt at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Furthermore, the wrongfulness of the excision was recognized and confirmed in resolution 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965, in which the General Assembly called upon the Government of the United Kingdom to take effective measures with a view to the immediate and full implementation of resolution 1514 (XV) and to take no action that would dismember the territory of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity. Such views were reiterated in resolution 2232 (XXI) of 20 December 1966 and resolution 2357 (XXII) of 19 December 1967. The decolonization process of Mauritius and the General Assembly's supervision thereof therefore remain incomplete.

More than 30 years after the excision of the Chagos archipelago, shocking truths about the circumstances of the dismemberment of the territory of Mauritius came to light. For many years, the United Nations and indeed the world were unaware of such facts, including internal Foreign Office memos of 1965 and

1966 showing a deliberate intent to present the United Nations with a fait accompli and to mislead it about the permanent nature of the population who lived in the Chagos archipelago. The Chagossians were cynically referred to as "Tarzans" and "Men Fridays" in order to avoid the scrutiny of the United Nations about the illegality of the dismemberment of the Mauritian territory and the eviction of the population living in the Chagos archipelago.

It is today appropriate to recall what was stated back in 1965 by the United Kingdom Colonial Secretary to the United Kingdom Prime Minister. He said that "it is essential that the arrangements for detachment of these islands should be completed as soon as possible" and that

"[f]rom the United Nations point of view the timing is particularly awkward. We are already under attack over Aden and Rhodesia... We shall be accused of creating a new colony in a period of decolonization... If there were any chance of avoiding any publicity until this session of the General Assembly adjourns at Christmas there would be an advantage to delaying the order in Council until then. But to do so would jeopardize the whole plan... Moreover we should lay ourselves open to an additional charge of dishonesty if we evaded the defence issue in the Fourth Committee and then made the order in Council immediately afterwards. It is therefore important that we should be able to present the United Nations with a fait accompli."

Delegations present here should find in those facts alone a compelling reason for the United Nations to be given today an opportunity to have a fresh look at the propriety of the acts of 1965. Draft resolution A/71/L.73 is not a belated wake-up call from Mauritius, as suggested by some. It addresses colonialism and decolonization — a matter of interest to all Members and to the Organization as a whole.

Mauritius has never missed any opportunity — as soon as its socioeconomic circumstances permitted it to do so and in the light of those shocking truths — to voice its opposition in international forums, including the General Assembly. There has also been continued and sustained international condemnation of the dismemberment of Mauritius, of the illegal excision of the Chagos archipelago and of the continuing colonial legacy, as voiced by the Organization of African Unity

and subsequently the African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China, and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States, as well as at the Africa-South America Summits.

The dismemberment of the territory of Mauritius without the freely given consent of Mauritius, in circumstances of patent and obvious duress, and the removal of the inhabitants of the Chagos archipelago with no possibility of return were acts constituting breaches of peremptory norms of international law, namely the violation of the principle of self-determination and the breach of fundamental principles of human rights. No amount of monetary compensation and no agreement to that effect can override those general principles of peremptory international law, not least the right of self-determination.

Mauritius, prior to its independence in 1968, had no legal competence as a State to give any consent to the detachment of the Chagos archipelago from its territory. It was a mere colony, had a colonial Governor and lacked the capacity to consent to detachment. It is obvious that it could not legally give consent. Even if — as the United Kingdom's seems to believe — some form of consent was given in return for monetary compensation, the excision was incompatible with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, as interpreted and applied by pertinent resolutions of the General Assembly. Consent, if any, of the colony of Mauritius could not validate breaches of the Charter. Moreover, Mauritius, as an independent sovereign State, has never entered into any agreement pertaining to such detachment.

I need not say more. I hope I have persuaded members of the Assembly that the arguments being put forward in support of a vote against the draft resolution, and based upon such previous consent or financial compensation, do not stand under international law.

Under the President's wise stewardship, the consideration of item 87 was deferred, at the United Kingdom's request, until June 2017 in order to allow Mauritius and the United Kingdom to engage in talks aimed at the completion of the decolonization process of Mauritius. Three rounds of talks have been held between Mauritius and the United Kingdom. However, those talks became pointless as the United Kingdom was unwilling to discuss a definitive date for the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius. It was unwilling to even talk about decolonization. The position that the

administering Power brought about in 1965 remains unchanged today. Consequently, as there is no prospect of any end to the colonization of Mauritius, the General Assembly has a continuing responsibility to act. More than five decades have passed and now is the time to act.

It is fitting for the General Assembly to fulfil that function on the basis of guidance from the International Court of Justice as to the legality of the excision of the Chagos archipelago in 1965. The draft resolution before the General Assembly contains two legal questions which are linked to the issue of decolonization — a matter of direct interest to the General Assembly. An advisory opinion would no doubt contribute significantly to the work of the General Assembly in fulfilling its functions under Chapters XI to XIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

Differing views of one or more States on the legality of the excision of the Chagos archipelago in 1965 do not make of the excision a mere bilateral matter. The International Court of Justice has made that absolutely clear, including in recent opinions on Kosovo and on the wall in occupied Palestinian territory. Rather, this matter concerns the General Assembly's need for guidance from the International Court of Justice on an important matter of decolonization. Bilateral talks seeking to address this issue simply are not a basis for denying multilateral interests in the case.

States Members of the United Nations have the collective responsibility to uphold the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and all relevant resolutions. In doing so, we shall be upholding the integrity and authority of institutions which we have created, in particular the General Assembly. The General Assembly's continued responsibility in completing the decolonization process which started in the 1950s should not be thwarted by arguments that are not in line with international law.

For reasons that are not valid, some of our friends are arguing for a vote against the draft resolution. Those reasons are not for the General Assembly to decide, and they can in any event be raised — if so desired — in proceedings before the International Court of Justice, in due course. Besides, breaches of principles of international law and General Assembly resolutions remain breaches that can never validly be acquiesced in or consented to or traded off with money. These breaches — and the issues of colonization

and decolonization — are of interest to the whole international community. They cannot ever be waved away as merely bilateral, as the administering Power would want Members to believe.

Likewise, our friends have invoked security concerns which they claim may be endangered. Let me make it clear that there is no threat to peace and security by seeking an advisory opinion. Simply asking these questions to the Court does not prohibit specific States from continuing to hold different views on the answer to the questions.

Mauritius is also very much concerned about security in the world. That is why we have repeatedly said that we do not have any problem with the military base, but that our decolonization process should be completed. We want to assure the United Kingdom and the United States of America that the exercise of effective control by Mauritius over the Chagos archipelago would not in any way pose any threat to the military base. Mauritius is committed to the continued operation of the base in Diego Garcia under a long-term framework, which Mauritius stands ready to enter into with the concerned parties.

The vote on the draft resolution before the General Assembly would be a vote in support of completing the process of decolonization, respect for international law and the rule of law, and respect for the international institutions that we States Members of the United Nations have created. It is also a vote of confidence in the International Court of Justice, the principal judicial organ of the United Nations. My delegation therefore urges representatives, through their vote for the draft resolution, to send a signal that their delegation, and indeed their State, supports international law and the rule of law.

Let me now briefly recapitulate the salient points of our position.

The Chagos archipelago has always formed and continues to form an integral part of the territory of Mauritius. The displaced inhabitants of the Chagos archipelago had lived there for many generations. The issue of the dismemberment of Mauritius has repeatedly been invoked at the annual meetings of the General Assembly and in other United Nations bodies, as well as in other international forums, such as the Organization of African Union/African Union, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77. The United Kingdom has refused to address decolonization

during recent talks and United Kingdom proposals during the talks were manifestly inadequate, failing to address the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius. The subject of the request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice does not relate to a bilateral dispute. The mere request for an advisory opinion does not have any bearing on or adversely affect the security interests of any other State. It is for the International Court of Justice to address outstanding questions as to the basis for the request for an advisory opinion. A vote in favour of the draft resolution would uphold the institutions of the United Nations, assist the General Assembly and support the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the international rule of law.

Just as item 87 was included by consensus on the agenda of the General Assembly, we would hope that the draft resolution can be adopted in the same manner. Let us allow the United Nations to fulfil its mandate as regards decolonization.

I was in London in 1965; 52 years later, I invite all Member States to join together in signalling that now is the time for the right of self-determination to be recognized and for the rule of law to prevail. I believe that it is the collective responsibility of all of us, as Members of the United Nations, to support this draft resolution.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

First, allow me to express our gratitude for the convening of this plenary meeting, which is devoted specifically to considering draft resolution A/71/L.73, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965", which was submitted by the Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African States.

The founding principles of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries are rooted in its rejection of colonialism. The struggle for liberation was the main factor that brought together the new independent States of Africa, Asia Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean. The support of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for decolonization initiatives has been and continues to be unshakable.

As we approach the end of the third decade for the eradication of colonization, the need to free peoples from the shackles of colonialism has become even more pressing and urgent. In this regard, I would like to recall the position agreed to by the Heads of State and Government during the seventeenth Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Margarita Island, Venezuela, from 17 to 18 September 2016. The Heads of State and Government reaffirmed that the Chagos archipelago, including Diego Garcia Island, which was illegally removed from the territory of Mauritius by the former colonial Power in violation of international law and resolutions 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960 and 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965 are an integral part of the territory of the Republic of Mauritius.

The Heads of State and Government noted with great concern that, despite the strong opposition expressed by the Republic of Mauritius, the United Kingdom sought to establish a marine protected area around the Chagos archipelago, further violating the sovereignty exercise of the Republic of Mauritius over the Chagos archipelago, as well as the exercise of the right of return for Mauritian citizens who were forcibly expelled from the archipelago by the United Kingdom. In this regard, they welcomed the judgment of the arbitral tribunal in the case brought by the Republic of Mauritius against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and according to which the marine protected area was established illegally, in accordance with international law.

The Heads of State and Government noted that, on 18 March, following the proceedings initiated by Mauritius against the United Kingdom under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to challenge the legality of the marine protected area, the arbitral tribunal established under annex VII of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea unanimously ruled that the marine protected area violates international law. Aware that the Government of the Republic of Mauritius is committed to taking all measures necessary to affirm the territorial integrity of the Republic of Mauritius and its sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago under international law, the Heads of State and Government decided to support such measures, in particular any action that might be taken in this regard by the General Assembly.

The Non-Aligned Movement, in line with the positions adopted by the Heads of State and Government

during the Movement's seventeenth summit, held at Margarita Island, Venezuela, calls on all States members of the Movement to support the action initiated by the Group of African States, under item 87 of the General Assembly's agenda.

Mr. Martins (Angola): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 15 States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), namely, Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

This statement is being delivered in connection with agenda item 87, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965", under which draft resolution A/71/L.73 has been submitted by the Group of African States this morning.

We also wish to align ourselves with the statements delivered just now by the representatives of the Congo and Venezuela on behalf of the African Group and the Non-Aligned Movement respectively.

The precursor organization of the Southern African Development Community, namely, the Frontline States, was formed in 1976 with the objective of assisting the Southern African countries to achieve independence both politically and economically. Although SADC has emerged today as one of the strongest regional economic blocs on the African continent, we have not foregone the primary objective for which the organization was established. As a region, SADC member States have experienced colonialism in different forms and lived through periods of minority Governments that catered to external interests rather than to the needs of the local people. In spite of all odds, challenges and pressures, we have stood by our brothers and sisters in Southern Africa and accompanied them in their journey towards freedom and liberation.

Today, the African Union is knocking at the door of the United Nations to request an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago prior to granting independence to Mauritius in 1965. It is therefore our moral duty, as SADC, to support the African Union in its endeavour to bring about the completion of the decolonization of Mauritius

and enable the exercise of effective control by that State over the Chagos archipelago.

The Chagos archipelago was illegally excised from the territory of Mauritius prior to its accession to independence, in a blatant breach of international law and resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960. Resolution 2066 (XX), adopted on 16 December 1965, which deals specifically with Mauritius, called upon the United Kingdom to take no action that would dismember the country of Mauritius and violate its territorial integrity. Nonetheless, the then-colonial Power proceeded with the dismemberment of the territory of Mauritius prior to its independence, an action that was clearly incompatible with the purposes and principles set forth in the United Nations Charter.

SADC has consistently supported Mauritius in its endeavour to exercise its full, effective control over the whole of its territory, which includes the Chagos archipelago. SADC summit declarations adopted in August 2014 and August 2015 firmly committed to all actions undertaken by Mauritius to complete its decolonization and

"endorsed international calls for the United Kingdom to expeditiously end its unlawful occupation of the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia, with a view to enabling Mauritius to effectively exercise its sovereignty over the Archipelago, without which the full decolonisation of Africa is not complete".

The SADC group is of the view that the continued occupation of the Chagos archipelago constitutes a challenge to the principles of the United Nations. As freedom, justice and dignity are the foundations of the United Nations and its institutions, any action that denies a nation its rights is deemed to be actually undermining the collective conscience and noble principles of the Organization.

Defending and supporting the right to self-determination and the completion of the decolonization process has always been a cardinal principle of SADC. True to that principle, SADC member States will vote in favour of the draft resolution A/71/L.73, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965", and earnestly call on all States Members of the United Nations to also support the draft resolution to

uphold the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): Last September, Mr. President, you asked the United Kingdom and Mauritius to engage in bilateral talks about the Chagos archipelago, which the United Kingdom administers as the British Indian Ocean Territory. We have done that in good faith. Only this week, our new Minister of State for the Commonwealth and the United Nations, Lord Ahmad, flew to New York to continue the bilateral dialogue and to meet the Minister Mentor of Mauritius, whose eloquent speech we have just heard.

You were right, Mr. President, to ask us to talk bilaterally. We should, as a rule, talk bilaterally to try to settle bilateral differences, and questions on the British Indian Ocean Territory have long been a bilateral matter between the United Kingdom and Mauritius. We firmly hold that these questions should remain a bilateral matter, so I regret that this issue has come to the General Assembly. It saddens us that a dispute between two United Nations Members and Commonwealth partners should have reached the Hall in this way. A more constructive path is still available, and I call for the withdrawal of draft resolution A/71/L.73 to keep that path open.

Despite the terms of the draft resolution, this is not a matter of decolonization. Mauritius became independent in 1968 through mutual agreement between the Council of Ministers of Mauritius and the United Kingdom Government. In separate talks with the Council of Ministers, Mauritius had earlier accepted the detachment of the Chagos archipelago — an agreement that Mauritius continued to respect until the 1980s. The General Assembly has not discussed this matter for decades. And yet, here we are today, returning to the issue. Just think, how many other bilateral disputes left over from history could be brought before the General Assembly in this way? The present draft resolution could set a precedent that many in this Hall could come to regret.

We do not doubt the right of the General Assembly to ask the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion on any legal question, but the fact that the General Assembly has not concerned itself with this matter for decades shows that today's debate has been called for other reasons. Put simply, the request for an advisory opinion is an attempt by the Government of Mauritius to circumvent the vital principle that a State

is not obliged to have its bilateral disputes submitted for judicial settlement without its consent. And let me be clear, we do not and we would not give that consent, because we are clear about what was agreed with Mauritius. If the draft resolution were adopted, the Court would of course have to decide whether it could properly respond to the request. Our view is that it could not do so, as it concerns a bilateral dispute between two Member States.

Many here today have told us privately that they too see this as bilateral business and have urged us to use bilateral means to resolve it. So in turn, let me urge all who have told us that — and others — to vote against the draft resolution today. In particular, I would ask any planning to abstain because this is a bilateral matter to please vote against it precisely for that reason.

We have made every constructive effort to engage and encourage the Government of Mauritius not to proceed with this plenary meeting today. Precisely because it is a bilateral matter, we entered into bilateral talks in good faith, determined to make them work. Since September, we have had three substantive rounds of talks, and as I said we held discussions with Mauritius at the Ministerial level here in New York this week. Despite every effort by the United Kingdom, we have not yet succeeded in bridging the differences between us. I regret that, but we remain committed to bilateral discussion.

The Assembly should also know that we have made significant offers to Mauritius. In 1965, we made a binding commitment to cede sovereignty of the Chagos archipelago to Mauritius when the archipelago is no longer needed for defence purposes. In the recent bilateral talks, our offers to Mauritius signalled very clearly that we acknowledge Mauritius's long-term interest in the archipelago. And we used the talks to try to increase mutual confidence between us, on those very matters that divide us.

So we offered, without prejudice to our sovereignty, a framework for the joint management, in environment and scientific study, of all the islands of the territory except for Diego Garcia. And we offered strategic and tactical forms of bilateral security cooperation. Those offers were relevant to the dispute and were seriously made. I regret that Mauritius did not engage with them, because they could have made a big difference to our mutual confidence and they would give Mauritius a

more tangible and direct stake in the archipelago than it has ever had.

It was a surprise to us to see that the draft resolution links the former inhabitants of the Chagos archipelago, the Chagossians, with our sovereignty. It is a surprise, because Mauritius has not made more than a passing reference to the cause of the Chagossians during all our bilateral talks. The Mauritian focus throughout the talks was its demand for a transfer of sovereignty. Nevertheless, the welfare of the Chagossians is an extremely important matter and a real concern to us, and I want to be clear about my Government's position.

Like successive Governments before it, the present United Kingdom Government has expressed sincere regret about the manner in which Chagossians were removed from the British Indian Ocean Territory in the late 1960s and early 1970s. And we have shown that regret through practical action and support for the Chagossians ever since. In 1973, the then British Government gave funds directly to the Government of Mauritius to assist with their resettlement. In 1982, a further payment was made through a trust fund.

More recently, we have considered very closely the matter of resettlement. We commissioned an independent feasibility study and undertook a public consultation. Those found that there is an aspiration among some Chagossian communities for resettlement, but demand appears to fall substantially when those consulted understand more about the likely conditions of civilian life on what are very remote and low-lying islands.

The Government has considered all the available information and has decided against resettlement on the grounds of feasibility, cost and defence and security interests. While we have ruled out resettlement, we are determined to address the Chagossians' desire for better lives and their desire for connections with the territory, so we are implementing a \$50-million support package that is being designed to improve Chagossian livelihoods in the communities where they now live—in Mauritius, the Seychelles and the United Kingdom. We have already consulted Chagossian groups in all three countries and will continue to do so.

As I say, the Mauritian focus throughout the talks has not been the Chagossians, but Mauritius's claim of sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago. The Government of Mauritius has repeatedly pressed us to specify a date for the transfer of sovereignty. We have

explained to them why we cannot do that. We made an agreement in 1965 and the United Kingdom is standing by that agreement.

We created the British Indian Ocean Territory for defence purposes, and in 1966 concluded an agreement with the United States of America for joint defence use of the territory. The extensive facilities that have since been established are primarily used as a forward operating location for aircraft and ships, and they make an essential contribution to regional and global security and stability. Moreover, they contribute to guaranteeing the security of the Indian Ocean itself, from which all neighbouring States benefit, including Mauritius. The facilities play a critical role in combating some of the most difficult and urgent problems of the twenty-first century, such as terrorism, international criminality, piracy and instability in its many forms.

Our current agreement with the United States lasts until 2036. We cannot, 19 years away, predict exactly what our defence purposes will require beyond that date. We should not and will not make arbitrary, ill-informed or premature decisions. We cannot gamble with the future of regional and global security. Mauritius's attempted assurances on the base's future lack credibility. In contrast, the United Kingdom stands by its commitment. When we no longer need the territory for defence purposes, sovereignty will pass. That, by the way, is exactly what we did in relation to the very similar agreement reached with Seychelles in 1965. We ceded sovereignty of islands to Seychelles when we no longer needed them for defence purposes.

In our dealings with Mauritius, we have tried to set out bilateral relations on a positive future path rather than focus on the past. But we should be clear about the past. The simple fact is that we negotiated the detachment of the Chagos archipelago with the elected representatives of Mauritius—the same people with whom we were separately negotiating the independence of Mauritius. The representatives of the Mauritian people had authority to negotiate with us in both negotiations, and in both cases they reached agreements with us. On the detachment of the Chagos archipelago, they negotiated, first, compensation, which we paid; secondly, various rights for Mauritius; and, thirdly, the long-term commitment to cede the islands to Mauritius when they were no longer needed for our defence purposes.

Our promise to cede sovereignty of the islands to Mauritius when they are no longer needed for defence purposes is not a sign that we lack confidence in our sovereignty. On the contrary, we were and remain confident about our sovereignty. In its recent arbitral award, the tribunal constituted under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea found that it had no jurisdiction to rule on the Mauritius sovereignty claim, contrary to what Mauritius has sought to imply in its notes to members of the General Assembly.

In 1965, we undertook to cede the territory in due course because we were setting it up for a specific purpose but could envisage a future situation in which the territory might no longer make a useful contribution to defence purposes. That moment has not yet come. The base is playing a vital role. Until that moment does come, and subsequently, we want to enjoy positive, friendly and constructive relations with the people and the Government of Mauritius. We have much in common and many reasons to work together. For our part, we are always willing to sit down and talk to our partners about contentious bilateral matters that divide us. Although our efforts so far have not been successful, I repeat that offer now to the Government of Mauritius. This is a bilateral matter for bilateral talks. It is not a matter for an advisory opinion to be given to the General Assembly.

The United Kingdom has always been and continues to be a strong upholder of international law. We are not opposing this draft resolution because we have changed our principles or because we believe the rule of law does not apply in this case. Rather, we oppose the draft resolution because referring a bilateral dispute to the International Court of Justice is not the appropriate course of action.

In conclusion, for all of these reasons, we strongly oppose the draft resolution. A request for an advisory opinion would be a distraction and, I fear, an obstacle to the path of bilateral talks, which is our preferred course of action. And it would set a terrible precedent, both for the General Assembly and for the Court. If Mauritius will not withdraw it, I urge Members to vote against the draft resolution.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): The draft resolution before us today (A/71/L.73) seeks to place before the International Court of Justice a bilateral territorial dispute concerning sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, which the United Kingdom

administers as the British Indian Ocean Territory. By pursuing the draft resolution, Mauritius seeks to invoke the Court's advisory opinion jurisdiction not for its intended purpose but rather to circumvent the Court's lack of contentious jurisdiction over this purely bilateral matter.

The United States has consistently recognized United Kingdom sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. For nearly four decades, the United States and the United Kingdom have operated a military base on Diego Garcia in the Chagos archipelago, which contributes considerably to regional and international security.

The General Assembly's power to request advisory opinions is an important one. It allows the General Assembly to seek assistance from the International Court of Justice in carrying out its functions under the Charter of the United Nations. However, we must be cautious not to allow this important power to be misused for the political gain of individual States. While Mauritius is attempting to frame this as an issue of decolonization relevant to the international community, at its heart it is a bilateral territorial dispute, and the United Kingdom has not consented to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

Were Mauritius's request to proceed, it would undermine the Court's advisory function and circumvent the right of States to determine for themselves the means by which to peacefully settle their disputes. Any State currently engaged in efforts to resolve a bilateral dispute should vote against the draft resolution in recognition of the risk that supporting it suggests that any such dispute could be referred to the Court in this manner, without a State's consent, when the other party does not like how talks are proceeding. Establishing such a precedent is dangerous for all States Members of the United Nations. It could lead to the normalization of litigating bilateral disputes through General Assembly advisory opinion requests, even when a State directly involved has not consented to the jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice.

If, despite these serious concerns, the draft resolution were adopted, the International Court of Justice would need to consider whether it would be appropriate for it to respond to this request. In our view, it would not. The advisory function of the International Court of Justice was not intended to settle disputes between States. A

decision to refer this dispute to the International Court of Justice would also interfere with ongoing efforts to achieve a solution through bilateral channels.

As our colleague from the United Kingdom has discussed, the United Kingdom has engaged in extensive and ongoing dialogue with Mauritius in an effort to address Mauritius's stated reasons for pursuing sovereignty and has made reasonable offers to Mauritius. We regret that Mauritius has chosen to circumvent these bilateral talks and we continue to believe that this issue can be addressed only through efforts from both sides to negotiate a solution in good faith.

For the foregoing reasons, the United States will vote against this draft resolution and encourages all Member States to do the same.

Mr. Akbaruddin (India): When the United Nations was established in 1945, more than seven decades ago, almost a third of the world's population lived in territories that were non-self-governing and dependent on colonial Powers. As a country that has gone through the throes of decolonization, India, since its own independence in 1947, has always been in the forefront of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid.

India was a sponsor of the landmark 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly, which proclaimed the need to unconditionally end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations. In 1962, India was elected as the first Chair of the Decolonization Committee, also known as the Committee of 24, which was established to monitor implementation of the 1960 Declaration and to make recommendations on its application. We continue to be an active member of that Committee today. Our ceaseless efforts to put an end to colonialism are therefore now a matter of record.

As a result of the sustained collective efforts of the United Nations membership, today fewer than 2 million people live in non-self-governing territories, according to United Nations documentation. Since the creation of the United Nations, more than 80 former colonies have gained their independence and taken their rightful place in the General Assembly. However, the process of decolonization that began with our own independence is still unfinished, seven decades later. In fact, in 2011 the Assembly proclaimed the decade 2011-2020 to be the third International Decade for the Eradication of

Colonialism. We would like to see that long-drawn-out process concluded.

That said, India shares the international community's concerns about security in the Indian Ocean. We are conscious of our collective commitment to ensuring the security and prosperity of our oceanic space. On balance, however, it is a matter of principle for India to uphold the process of decolonization and respect for the sovereignty of nations. As part of our long-standing support to all peoples striving for decolonization, we have also consistently supported Mauritius, a fellow developing country in Africa with whom we have age-old people-to-people bonds, in that country's quest for the restoration of its sovereignty over the Chagos archipelago.

Continuing our consistent approach to this important issue of decolonization, India supports draft resolution A/71/L.73, proposed by Mauritius and co-sponsored on behalf of the members of the Group of African States, and will vote in favour of it.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): My delegation will cast its vote on draft resolution A/71/L.73 today based on the following reasons.

First, we are committed to the common African position on the issue, as reflected in the relevant resolution adopted by the African Union in January at its twenty-eighth Summit. Secondly, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries (NAM) is committed to the issue, as reflected in NAM's final declaration at its Summit held on Margarita Island, Venezuela, in September 2016. Thirdly, this is one of the pending issues that are preventing us from putting an end to colonization, and we therefore hope that we can find an appropriate solution to it that accords with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya): Kenya aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of the Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the Group of African States, and Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries.

Today we shall join all 54 States members of the African Union in voting in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.73, on the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius. For Kenya, this vote is a historical imperative in our solidarity with a sister African nation, born of the suffering and the blood that was shed in the

struggle for our own country's independence, and of the need to uphold freedom, liberty and human rights in Africa and the rest of the world. The solidarity of the African Union on the issue signifies and exemplifies the depth of our eagerness to ensure the swift, permanent and peaceful resolution of the matter of the Chagos archipelago, and to see the restoration of Mauritius's national sovereignty over its rightful historical territory.

The historical injustice and deep scars of the human rights abuses that have accompanied the occupation and exploitation of the archipelago demand that all nations that believe in the principles of the Charter of the United Nations should stand up to be counted in support of today's draft resolution. After all, all that is being asked for here is an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice — a mere advisory opinion of an international court that we all respect. What could possibly be so unpalatable about that? There can be no difference, indeed no moral or ethical space, between a commitment to human rights today and the correction of grave historical injustices perpetrated in the past, no matter how embarrassing or how high the cost. We believe that our civilization and our membership in the United Nations demand this of us.

Mr. Mero (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation appreciates your leadership in convening today's meeting, Mr. President. This is the right time to consider this issue in the wake of the consultations and discussions held by the contending parties.

We are convening today to consider the issue of the Chagos islands as raised by the African Union. My delegation aligns itself with the statements delivered earlier by the representatives of Venezuela, on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, the Republic of the Congo, on behalf of the Group of African States, and Angola, on behalf of the Southern African Development Community.

In principle, we believe that the process of decolonization is essential and that consultations are a recipe for arriving at a solution wherever there is disagreement among the parties. The arguments on both sides show that consultations have taken place and that bilateral arrangements to resolve the issue have been discussed. In the wake of today's meeting and the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom, my delegation feels that the time has come for the two countries to convene and address the process of decolonizing the Chagos islands.

In conclusion, we wish to encourage the parties to consent to reach a final resolution of the issue of the Chagos islands. Tanzania joins the other countries of Africa in supporting Mauritius.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/71/L.73.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): This statement is made in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and has also been made available on the PaperSmart portal.

The implementation of the mandates contained in draft resolution A/71/L.73, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965", would give rise to additional resource requirements under the regular budget. However, the work associated with rendering the requested advisory opinion would require further assessment and consultations with stakeholders in order to determine the detailed related costs. Accordingly, it is not possible for the Secretariat to determine at this stage the full extent of the programme budget implications arising from the draft resolution.

However, based on precedents set by recent advisory opinions delivered by the International Court of Justice, it is estimated that the cost of an advisory opinion concerning the Chagos archipelago could range from approximately \$450,000 to \$600,000. Should the General Assembly adopt the draft resolution, the Secretary-General would submit a detailed revised estimates report for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2018-2019 to the General Assembly for its consideration at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly.

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote before the vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): The Assembly will understand that, for the reasons given in my statement

earlier, the United Kingdom strongly opposes draft resolution A/71/L.73. I will not repeat all those reasons now.

However, I must underline again that this is a bilateral dispute between two States, the United Kingdom and Mauritius. Both the United Kingdom and Mauritius have excluded disputes with other Commonwealth States from their acceptance of the compulsory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice. The draft resolution is therefore a back-door route to the Court. The General Assembly is being used to cut across the principle that States are not obliged to have their bilateral disputes submitted for judicial settlement without their consent. Doing so would set a dangerous precedent, and it would be an obstacle to bilateral discussions, which are the right way to resolve this dispute. We therefore call on all members of the Assembly to join us in voting against the draft resolution.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): As we stated in our earlier remarks, the United States continues to view this as a purely bilateral matter that would have more appropriately been resolved through continued diplomatic engagement. Voting in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.73 would set a dangerous precedent, suggesting that the General Assembly could refer a bilateral dispute for an advisory opinion anytime one party chooses that path over engaging in good-faith negotiations. We urge all Member States to carefully consider the consequences of such a decision and to vote against this draft resolution.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): With respect to agenda item 87 on the Republic of Mauritius's request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from that country in 1965, Chile would like to inform the Assembly that it does not associate itself with the statement delivered by the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, who spoke in his capacity as the Chairman of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Our position is in accordance with the reservation expressed by our country under chapter II of the final document of the seventeenth summit of the Heads of State and Government of the NAM, which took place at Margarita Island, Venezuela, in September 2016.

Chile bases its national position on international law, whose values and purposes serve as a guarantee for the sovereign equality of States, as well as their integrity and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Similarly, Chile has promoted and continues to promote the rule of law as a pillar of international relations. Today, pursuant to that principle, Chile takes note of the request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965, which includes matters that may be dealt with bilaterally in compliance with the rules of international law.

Chile also wishes to observe that the question posed by Mauritius points to a solution that is defined within the decolonization process, regarding which the international community has an interest that it be interpreted within the terms and principles set forth in resolution 1514 (XV). For those reasons, Chile will abstain in the voting on draft resolution A/71/L.73.

Mr. Drobnyak (Croatia): Croatia remains a strong and unequivocal advocate of decolonization and firmly supports respect for the resolutions to that effect adopted by the General Assembly, including the pivotal resolution on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples, namely, resolution 1514 (XV).

At the same time, with regard to bilateral disputes between States, we believe in the proper application of international law and the use of appropriate avenues for addressing such disputes. In that connection, as the jurisprudence within the architecture of applicable international law must be stable and predictable, so must also be the ways of reaching such international resources. It is for that reason that we shall vote against the draft resolution before us (A/71/L.73) and continue to support the pursuit of direct talks in good faith between Mauritius and the United Kingdom on all outstanding issues.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): The situation at the heart of draft resolution A/71/L.73, submitted by the Group of African States, is a bilateral dispute, for which we can only hope for a solution. For some months now we have called on our Mauritian and British friends to reach such a solution through negotiation. We regret that they have not yet reached a settlement, but we believe that the possibilities offered by negotiation have certainly not been completely exhausted.

In that context, we are not convinced that the adoption of a request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice would facilitate such a settlement. A sovereignty dispute between States, which is the case here, should be resolved in accordance with the principle of the concerned States' consent to court adjudication. We must all be attentive to respecting a principle that the International Court of Justice has considered to be fundamental.

That is why the French delegation is unable to vote in favour of the draft resolution before us. However, we wish to express our hope that the parties to the dispute will continue to make efforts to reach a negotiated solution. We therefore hope that in the near future the parties will be able to reach a agreed solution that is in their interests and in the interests of their partners and friends, of which France is one.

Ms. Beckles (Trinidad and Tobago): Trinidad and Tobago wishes to give the following explanation of vote prior to the voting on draft resolution A/71/L.73, submitted under agenda item 87, "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos archipelago from Mauritius in 1965".

At the outset, Trinidad and Tobago wishes to reiterate its commitment to the Non-Aligned Movement and to the peaceful settlement of disputes. At the same time, we also recognize that the opinion of the Court is not binding and serves to further advance international law and bring about an independent solution to the issue at hand. For those reasons, Trinidad and Tobago will vote in favour of draft resolution A/71/L.73.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote before the vote.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.73, entitled "Request for an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legal consequences of the separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965".

For members' information, the draft resolution has closed for e-sponsorship.

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft

resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/71/L.73: Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

The President: A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cabo Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Jordan, Kenya, Kiribati, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Philippines, Republic of Moldova, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Afghanistan, Albania, Australia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Lithuania, Maldives, Montenegro, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Abstaining:

Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Iceland, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Micronesia (Federated States

of), Mongolia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Palau, Panama, Paraguay, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Turkey, Tuvalu

Draft resolution A/71/L.73 was adopted by 94 votes to 15, with 65 abstentions (resolution 71/292).

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Bird (Australia): Australia acknowledges the range of carefully considered positions on the matter before us and wishes to take this opportunity to explain its vote.

We respect the decision of the Government of Mauritius to bring forward resolution 71/292, which we appreciate was sponsored by all members of the Group of African States.

Australia has been a strong supporter of the United Nations decolonization agenda over many decades. We are deeply conscious that the decolonization process around the globe is not complete, and we have sympathy for the desire of Mauritius to resolve outstanding issues in relation to the Chagos archipelago, consistent with the 1960 Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples.

In Australia's view, however, the vote raised a more specific question, namely, whether it is appropriate to request the International Court of Justice to render an advisory opinion on very specific issues that directly concern the rights and interests of two nations, Mauritius and the United Kingdom. On that question, Australia's long-standing position is that it is not appropriate for the advisory opinion jurisdiction of the Court to be used to determine the rights and interests of States arising in a specific context.

We also note that the Diego Garcia military base plays a pivotal role in the global fight against terrorism. We consider that it is in the interest of all members of the General Assembly to ensure that there is no uncertainty

about the status of that base that could jeopardize its contribution to international peace and security.

For those specific reasons, Australia voted against today's resolution. We nevertheless encourage both Mauritius and the United Kingdom to intensify their dialogue, with a view to achieving a durable solution consistent with both countries' commitment to the international rules-based order.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): Uruguay, in line with its tradition of respect for international law and its support for the request for the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, as well as its support for the decolonization processes and the sovereignty and territorial integrity claims of peoples, voted in favour of resolution 71/292 submitted for the consideration of the Assembly.

Uruguay values the initiative of the Republic of Mauritius in requesting an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Similarly, Uruguay continues to encourage dialogue in the search for just and lasting settlements to disputes.

Mrs. Puerschel (Germany): Germany's abstention in the voting on resolution 71/292 is not to be understood as expressing any view whatsoever on the legal consequences of the matters in question. In our view, the dispute between Mauritius and the United Kingdom is bilateral in character.

We welcome the fact that both parties are willing to settle the issue peacefully, as provided for in the Charter of the United Nations. We note, however, that one party to the dispute has expressly not agreed to involve the International Court of Justice in this matter, which is in conformity with the Court's Statute.

Mr. Li Yongsheng (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China abstained in the voting on resolution 71/292, which was just adopted.

I wish to reiterate China's firm support for the decolonization process and its understanding of the position of Mauritius on the question of decolonization.

Recently, the countries concerned made efforts, through consultation and negotiation, to seek solutions to the question concerning the Chagos archipelago. China notes that the aforementioned negotiation has not yielded progress. China calls upon the countries concerned to continue to make efforts in good faith and to continue to carry out bilateral negotiations and

consultations, so as to seek an appropriate solution to the question of Chagos archipelago as soon as possible.

Mr. Gómez Camacho (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico recognizes the International Court of Justice as the supreme jurisdictional body in charge of peacefully resolving disputes through the application of international law. My country has accepted the jurisdiction of the Court and acknowledges its contribution to the strengthening of the rule of law through the issuance of advisory opinions.

Mexico has turned to and supported the use of the Court for the issuance of advisory opinions in significant cases of international law. The advisory opinion requested by Mauritius complies with the requirements established by the Charter of the United Nations and by the Statute of the Court, and implies the establishment of dialogue, as well as the search for a negotiated bilateral solution beyond the opinion that the Court could offer.

My delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 71/292, because we consider that, regardless of the opinion that could be issued by the Court, the solution to this case must, in fact, be found at the bilateral level. Mexico calls on the United Kingdom and the Government of Mauritius to seek, with political determination, a swift solution to this case, which is important since both are member States of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Mr. Van Bohemen (New Zealand): New Zealand is a strong supporter of the international rule of law and the peaceful settlement of international disputes through recourse to international courts and judicial mechanisms. However, we do not believe that the advisory jurisdiction of the International Court of Justice offers a useful method for clarifying the issues in this case. While advisory opinions can provide valuable guidance to the United Nations organ requesting the opinion, we do not see the jurisdiction as appropriate in this dispute.

Mr. Lundkvist (Sweden): Sweden firmly supports the International Court of Justice and its role in settling disputes submitted to the Court in accordance with article 36 of its Statute. Sweden also supports and encourages the use of advisory opinions in accordance with article 65 of the Statute. In our view, the competence of the Court in disputes referred to it by States and the mandate of the Court to give an advisory

opinion are two different functions under the Statute of the Court and should be kept apart.

While issues of decolonization and the right to self-determination are of concern to the international community, bilateral disputes over sovereignty should be dealt with in accordance with article 36 of the Statute. For those reasons Sweden abstained in the voting on resolution 71/292 just adopted.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): The topic under discussion today is undoubtedly one that involves bilateral relations. The problem is that the discussion has not gone deep enough; the actual root of the problem — namely, why is there a relationship between Mauritius and the United Kingdom at the bilateral level— has not been addressed? This issue is not the same as cases when our countries have bilateral discussions on territorial or border issues. The International Court of Justice exists to resolve those types of problems.

But what is before us is something else altogether, as it deals with sovereignty. As almost everyone here has acknowledged, the problem is not the borders between one country and another, in this case countries that are thousands of kilometres away from each other. They have no common borders at all. Rather, it is a problem of decolonization. It is a problem of the sovereignty of one country that had part of its territory removed before independence was granted. That is an issue for the United Nations. Therefore, we do have jurisdiction. If we deny that, then we have to deny the Special Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee, as if they had nothing to do with such matters. The issue before us involves bilateral relations between a colonizing Power and a colonized country.

In that respect, we would like to thank both the United Kingdom and the United States for their visits. The United Kingdom visited us personally in our Mission to present their position. We would also like to thank the Government of Mauritius, which did the same. With one side asking us to vote in favour, while the other said we should vote against, we examined the proposal and decided to vote in favour of the proposal for an advisory opinion, because we believe that this case is a problem between a colonial Power that appropriated the right to cut off a part of the territory of a former British colony before accepting the independence of Mauritius. This problem is of a political nature. It has to do with decolonization. However, it is also of a legal nature. As

a result, just like with any legal problem, the General Assembly has the right under the Charter, as we have seen this morning, to request an advisory opinion.

We are not requesting the submission of the problem of Mauritius with the United Kingdom to the International Court of Justice. We are asking for an advisory opinion from the Court. That is a right that we all enjoy, and it is a right that needs to be exercised. It is also a right that has already been exercised by the Assembly. In June of 1971, the International Court of Justice, at the request of the General Assembly and the Security Council, issued an advisory opinion on the case of Namibia, stating that the interference of a neighbouring country in a territory that was going to be declared independent was against international law, by a vote of 13 in favour and two against, the Court took a decision that was in favour of what the Security Council had requested, namely, an advisory opinion by the Court.

We also had the case in 1975 on the matter of a territory that was colonized by Spain, Western Sahara. That issue was the subject of consultations, and the International Court of Justice accepted the case and provided a legal response. That is all we are asking the Court to do now. The Court is not going to resolve the matter, because such issues are not resolved in the Court. However, the Court, as the supreme jurisdictional body of the United Nations, can be requested by the General Assembly and therefore has the obligation to provide a legal response on the issue, which is all that Mauritius is asking for right now.

As a result, the request is legitimate. The resolution is a legally sustainable request supported by our legislation. In that respect, and expressing our gratitude once again for the opinions of both sides, El Salvador voted in favour of the request of Mauritius, because we believe that it is the only alternative that is in accordance with international law.

Allow me to say that as a small country, we are protected by international law. We do not have nuclear weapons; we do not have big armies to defend our sovereignty. It is international law that defends us, and as a result we have the obligation to support everything that is being done to enhance international law. Resolution 71/292, just adopted this morning, is a resolution that enhances the role of international law in the resolution of disputes.

We must stress that discussions should continue between the United Kingdom and Mauritius; however, those discussions must include the question of sovereignty. The representative of the United Kingdom here in New York explained very clearly to me that they are ready to negotiate and talk about cooperation. He said that they are offering assistance to Mauritius. He said that they were willing to offer security guarantees to Mauritius, and they have ask Mauritius to participate in the marine reserve that the British unilaterally set up and which, according to certain judges, violated international law. But he told me that he categorically refused to discuss sovereignty. Unfortunately, that is the current problem. That is why we believe that it is necessary to seek the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Mr. Blanchard (Canada): Canada abstained today because it does not take sides in foreign territorial disputes. However, as friends to both Mauritius and the United Kingdom, Canada encourages those two States to resolve or manage their dispute peacefully and amicably. I would like, however, to add a few points that I think are important in this instance.

Canada supports the International Court of Justice and the important role it can play in the peaceful settlement of disputes. But it is a fundamental principle and key to the effectiveness of the Court's work that the settlement of contentious cases between States through the International Court of Justice requires the consent of both parties. Seeking the referral of a contentious case between States through the General Assembly's power to request an advisory opinion circumvents that fundamental principle, in our view.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): Portugal abstained in the voting on resolution 71/292, adopted today. Portugal supports the goal of non-self-governing territories to exercise the right to self-determination, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations, including the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, contained in resolution 1514 (XV) and adopted on 14 December 1960.

Portugal is also a firm believer in the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes and, in particular, in the role played, in that regard, by the International Court of Justice. Portugal expresses its hope that the parties will continue pursuing all means aimed at reaching a

peaceful settlement of the dispute so as to resolve that matter in accordance with international law.

Mr. Heumann (Israel): Without addressing the substantive issues raised in resolution 71/292, Israel is of the view that the resolution seeks to refer a bilateral dispute to the International Court of Justice. In our view, it is inappropriate to have recourse to the advisory opinion mechanism in order to involve the International Court of Justice in a territorial dispute that is essentially bilateral in nature. The underlying approach reflected in the resolution represents, in our view, a misuse of the advisory opinion provision under Article 96 of the Charter of the United Nations and undermines the principal distinction between the jurisdiction of the Court in contentious cases and its advisory jurisdiction — a distinction that should be maintained for the sake of the United Nations and the International Court of Justice itself. It is for that reason that Israel voted against the resolution.

Mr. Vieira (Brazil): Brazil voted in favour of resolution 71/292. We continue to encourage all of the parties involved to remain genuinely engaged in dialogue and committed to the peaceful settlement of this issue.

Decolonization constitutes one of the unfinished tasks of the United Nations and is therefore an issue of interest to the international community as a whole. The General Assembly has a crucial role to play in advancing the process of decolonization. One of the tools at its disposal, as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, is to request that the International Court of Justice provide clarification on legal issues through its advisory jurisdiction.

A vote in favour of this resolution does not mean a commitment to any particular interpretation of the underlying issue. It means a request for the principal legal body of the United Nations to provide, through a non-binding opinion, legal elements that may guide all parties to definitively settle this question.

Mr. Suan (Myanmar): Myanmar has always been a steadfast advocate of decolonization. We stand by, in good faith, the 1960 United Nations Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. However, we believe that the ongoing bilateral negotiations represent the best way to avoid confrontation and to bring a mutually accepted solution

to Mauritius and the United Kingdom. Myanmar therefore abstained in the voting on resolution 71/292.

Mr. Habib (Indonesia): Indonesia is among the countries that went through a long and difficult process of decolonization. For that reason, we understand fully what it means for the people of a nation to obtain their rightful independence and sovereignty from their former colonial Power.

Such was the mandate of our Constitution, which underlined that it is the inalienable right of all nations to achieve their independence. Furthermore, we are of the strong view that the principle of territorial integrity is a fundamental right of any sovereign State, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations.

The sovereignty of Mauritius over the Chagos archipelago is well recognized, and every effort should be undertaken to realize the fulfilment of the legitimate rights of Mauritius. In that regard, we appeal to all concerned parties to explore all diplomatic negotiation tools based on the principles of reconciliation and the peaceful settlement of disputes, with the aim of fulfilling the mandates of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December 1960, and resolution 2066 (XX) of 16 December 1965.

Furthermore, it is necessary to establish a clear time frame for the return of the territory under discussion. In that regard, a long-lasting solution that is mutually agreed by all concerned parties must be fully upheld as the noble goal of that negotiation. The parties involved in this matter need to show their genuine intention and strong commitment to bringing an acceptable win-win solution to the table.

Based on those considerations, as a friend to all concerned States and in order to ensure that the outcome of this matter can be obtained through peaceful negotiations and after carefully examining the proposal and its implications, my delegation abstained in the voting on resolution 71/292.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to conclude its consideration of agenda item 87?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.



General Assembly

Seventy-first session

89th plenary meeting

Friday, 30 June 2017, 11 a.m.

New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Thomson (Fiji)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 132, 149 to 154, 156 to 159, sub-items (a) and (b) of agenda item 160, 162 to 164, and 133.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Ms. Diana Lee of Singapore, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Fifth Committee before the Assembly.

Ms. Lee (Singapore), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee: I have the honour to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee containing recommendations on issues that required action during the second part of the resumed seventy-first session of the General Assembly.

In the course of the second part of the resumed session, which took place between 1 May and 29 June, the Fifth Committee held 11 plenary meetings and numerous rounds of informal and informal consultations, some of them running late into the night, into the early morning and on weekends. In accordance with resolution 49/233 A, of 23 December 1994, the second part of the resumed session of the Fifth Committee was devoted primarily to considering the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping missions and associated peacekeeping issues. The Committee

considered the financing of 14 peacekeeping missions, as well as other items related to peacekeeping and to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017.

The reports of the Committee on agenda item 115, entitled "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other appointments", as contained in document (A/71/590/Add.3), and item 134, entitled "Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017", as contained in document A/71/716, have already been considered by the Assembly at its 81st, 84th and 87th plenary meetings, held on 11 May, 1 June and 15 June, respectively.

Let me now present the additional reports of the Fifth Committee containing recommendations on issues that require action by the General Assembly.

On agenda item 132, entitled "Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/71/702/Add.1, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly adopt a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

On agenda item 149, entitled "Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations", in paragraph 14 of its report contained in document A/71/708/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following five draft resolutions: draft resolution I, entitled "Financing of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda"; draft resolution II, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy"; draft resolution III, entitled

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"Support account for peacekeeping operations"; draft resolution IV, entitled "Triennial review of the rates and standards for reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment"; and draft resolution V, entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse", which were adopted by the Committee without a vote.

With regard to the draft resolutions on the financing of peacekeeping operations, I should like to inform the General Assembly that, with the exception of sub-item (b) of agenda item 160, entitled "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon", the Committee adopted all of the draft resolutions without a vote.

The reports of the Fifth Committee are presented under the following agenda items: item 150, "Financing of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei", as contained in document A/71/945; item 151, "Financing of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic", as contained in document A/71/946; item 152, "Financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire", as contained in document A/71/715/Add.1; item 153, "Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus", as contained in document A/71/947; item 154, "Financing of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", as contained in document A/71/948; item 156, "Financing of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti", as contained in document A/71/949; item 157, "Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo", as contained in document A/71/950; item 158, "Financing of the United Nations Mission in Liberia", as contained in document A/71/951; item 159, "Financing of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali", as contained in document A/71/952; sub-item (a) of agenda item 160, "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East: United Nations Disengagement Observer Force", as contained in document A/71/953; item 161, "Financing of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan", as contained in document A/71/955; item 162, "Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara", as contained in document A/71/956; item 163, "Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur", as contained in document A/71/957; and item 164, "Financing of the activities arising from the

Security Council resolution 1863 (2009)", as contained in document A/71/958.

With regard to sub-item (b) of agenda item 160, entitled "Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East: United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon", the report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/71/954. The Committee considered the draft resolution, as orally amended, and decided to retain the fourth preambular paragraph and the existing operative paragraphs 4, 5 and 13 by a single recorded vote. In paragraph 12 of that report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution, as orally amended, as a whole, which the Committee also adopted by a recorded vote.

Under agenda item 133, entitled "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", in paragraph 5 of its report contained in document A/71/717/Add.2, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft decision relating to questions deferred for future consideration. The Committee adopted the draft decision without a vote.

This is the last time that I am taking the floor as Rapporteur. I therefore ask the Assembly's indulgence in order to make a few personal remarks. It has been a difficult session for the Fifth Committee, and I commend those who fought hard. I recognize those who led the groups with distinction and left no one behind, even when the road was darkest, as well as those who did not forget their friends.

I acknowledge my friend who was given a very difficult task but who conducted herself with integrity and always showed respect for those around her. To the Chair of the Fifth Committee, Ambassador Inga Rhonda King of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I wish to express thanks for her calm, impartial and steady leadership. I have valued the opportunity to work with her.

I am also deeply grateful to Ms. Sharon Van Buerle and her team in the Fifth Committee secretariat. They moved heaven and earth to get us where we are today and provide adult supervision to the Committee and its Bureau. They are the rock on which we stand.

With respect to my fellow members on the Bureau, we had many hours of what I believe in diplomatic parlance are called frank and robust discussions. I value

the friendships we have built and I now look forward to having such discussions on the floor.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank not only the conference officers, interpreters and sound engineers who service the Fifth Committee, but also the unseen members of the Secretariat — the people who handle our papers and field countless hours of questions from us and who work late into the evening and the early hours of the morning to answer those questions, put together Excel spreadsheets, produce documents, provide information and do all manner of other things to enable our work. Their work in a cubicle somewhere may feel thankless at times, but it makes the work in the field possible. I thank them.

Finally, I offer thanks to my colleagues and friends in the Fifth Committee. There have been many jokes made about the Committee — survival of the fittest, consensus by attrition, and United Nations security staff walking past one at 2 a.m. saying "I assume you guys are with the Fifth". But we are here because we are defending our countries and our groups. We are here because we care.

I hope our friends who are leaving us after this session will take these memories with them. And with respect to those of us who remain, I look forward to getting back into the trenches with them this fall.

The Acting President: I thank the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee.

Before proceeding further, I would like to emphasize to delegations that, as the Fifth Committee concluded its work only yesterday, the relevant reports before the Assembly today are available in English only. It is my understanding that they will be issued in all the official languages as soon as possible. I thank members for their understanding.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The Acting President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations on the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that, under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that:

"When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I further remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Committee, unless the Secretariat is notified to the contrary in advance. That means that, where recorded votes were taken, we will do the same. I also hope that we may proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Fifth Committee.

Agenda item 132 (continued)

Financial reports and audited financial statements, and reports of the Board of Auditors

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/702/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.30.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/261 B).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 132.

Agenda item 149 (continued)**Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/708/Add.1)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it five draft resolutions recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 14 of its report. We will now take a decision on draft resolutions I through V one by one.

Draft resolution I is entitled "Financing of the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe, Uganda", the text of which, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.47. The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution I without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution I was adopted (resolution 71/293).

The Acting President: Draft resolution II is entitled "Financing of the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy", the text of which, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.48. The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution II without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution II was adopted (resolution 71/294).

The Acting President: Draft resolution III is entitled "Support account for peacekeeping operations", the text of which, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.49. The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution III without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution III was adopted (resolution 71/295).

The Acting President: Draft resolution IV is entitled "Triennial review of the rates and standards for reimbursement to Member States for contingent-owned equipment", the text of which, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.50. The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution IV without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution IV was adopted (resolution 71/296).

The Acting President: Draft resolution V is entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse", the text of which, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.51. The Fifth Committee adopted draft resolution V without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution V was adopted (resolution 71/297).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 149.

Agenda item 150**Financing of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/945)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.33.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/298).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 150.

Agenda item 151**Financing of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/946)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.38.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without

a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/299).

The Acting President: General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 151.

Agenda item 152 (continued)

Financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/715/Add.1)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.41.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/271 B).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 152.

Agenda item 153

Financing of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/947)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.39.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/300).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 153.

Agenda item 154

Financing of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/948)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.42.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/301).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 154.

Agenda item 156

Financing of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/949)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.40.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/302).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 156.

Agenda item 157**Financing of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/950)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.34.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/303).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 157.

Agenda item 158**Financing of the United Nations Mission in Liberia****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/951)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.43.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/304).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 158.

Agenda item 159**Financing of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/952)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.44.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/305).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 159.

Agenda item 160 (continued)**Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East****(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/953)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. For the time being, the text of the draft resolution is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.46.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/306)

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic): The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic joined the consensus on the adoption of resolution 71/306, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force". Also, our delegation will vote in favour of the draft resolution recommended in document A/71/954 and currently contained in document A/C.5/71/L.31, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon". Our position is based on our consistent

support for the principle that the responsibility for financing those two forces should be borne by Israel, the aggressor and occupying Power, which caused their establishment in the first place. Our position is in line with the basic principles contained in resolution 1874 (S-IV), of 27 June 1963, and with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 160.

Agenda item 160

Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/954)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 12 of its report. The text of the draft resolution, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.31, as orally revised.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon".

A recorded vote has been requested. A single, separate vote has been requested on the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 4, 5 and 13.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Paraguay,

Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, United States of America

Abstentions:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Panama, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Sao Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Sudan, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraphs 4, 5 and 13 were retained by 85 votes to 3, with 53 abstentions.

The Acting President: I shall now put to the vote the draft resolution as a whole.

A recorded vote was requested.

In favour:

Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan,

Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Zimbabwe

Against:

Canada, Israel, United States of America

Draft resolution A/C.5/71/L.31, as a whole, as orally revised, was adopted by 137 votes to 3 (resolution 71/307).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 160.

Agenda item 161

Financing of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/955)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The text of the draft resolution, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.35.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

Draft resolution A/C.5/71/L.35 was adopted (resolution 71/308).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 161.

Agenda item 162

Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/956)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The text of the draft resolution, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.45.

We shall now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution A/C.5/71/L.45 was adopted (resolution 71/309).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 162.

Agenda item 163

Financing of the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/957)

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The text of the draft resolution, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.36.

We shall now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution A/C.5/71/L.36 was adopted (resolution 71/310).

The Acting President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 163.

Agenda item 164**Financing of the activities arising from Security Council resolution 1863 (2009)****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/958)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report. The text of the draft resolution, for the time being, is contained in document A/C.5/71/L.37.

We shall now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

Draft resolution A/C.5/71/L.37 was adopted (resolution 71/311).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 164.

Agenda item 133 (continued)**Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations****Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/717/Add.2)**

The Acting President: The Assembly has before it a draft decision recommended in paragraph 5 of the same report. The text of the draft decision is contained for the time being in document A/C.5/71/L.52.

The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision, entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration". The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 71/546 C).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 133.

On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to thank Her Excellency Ms. Inga Rhonda King, Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations and Chair of the Fifth Committee, the members of the Bureau and representatives for a job well done. I also want to express my appreciation for the words shared by the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee and for everyone's hard work during the course of the month. Participants have developed an interesting vocabulary for describing their work and maintaining high spirits. Their performance in the Fifth Committee was exemplary, and I thank them all on behalf of the General Assembly.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Fifth Committee before it for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.